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Erica F. Jordan March 17, 2013

Musical Expressions of Somali Identity in the North American Diaspora

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Abstract

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This thesis examines cultural hybridity through the lens of musical identity. Using the music of the Somali diaspora as a case study, it specifically focuses on how immigration and the formation of a North American Somali diaspora have changed traditional Somali musical structures, and how the Somalis view and understand these changes. The development of contemporary music in the diaspora is compared to the development of professional popular music in Somalia (called *heello-hees*) beginning in the 1940s. Using musical analysis of songs from both periods, retentions and changes can be seen in instrumentation, rhythm, poetry composition, song structure, timbre, and melody. Placed within the Somali political and cultural context, analysis of these songs demonstrates that, despite strong generational tensions within the diaspora, *heello-hees* and contemporary music developed with similar goals and in similar contexts. Both emerged as a product of young generations in new environments. Just as the creators of *heello-hees* were defining their Somaliness in an emerging independent nation, the musicians of the diaspora are defining their Somaliness within their new Somali-American community, using music as an expression of this identity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Western society often portrays Somalia and its people in a negative light, with an emphasis placed on the political strife that has historically characterized the region known as the Horn of Africa. Somalia has consistently garnered negative press throughout the world, particularly in America, with stories revolving around the lack of government, control by Al-Shabab (an organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda),[1] and increasing incidents of piracy off the coast.[2] This thesis aims to look beyond the negative press and connect with the Somali community in America in hopes of gaining an understanding of the Somali creative spirit and how it is changing.

In this thesis, I first trace the development of traditional sung poetry forms to modern popular professional music, *heello-hees*, in Somalia. I then compare this to the contemporary music of the Somali diaspora, to see how the music has evolved over geographical space and time. The music is analyzed within a cultural and political context in order to explore how Somalis understand, interact with, and produce their culture. My methodology included research on Somali history and culture, interviews with members of the Somali diaspora, observations of social events, and making transcriptions and analyzing musical examples. This hybrid methodology reflects the hybridity of the music itself. My results show how certain musical characteristics have both been changed and retained in the Somali diaspora and how particular changes reflect and affect Somali identity in the diaspora. I hope to provide a thorough landscape of Somali culture through

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[1] Rick Gladstone, "Security Council Loosens Somalian Arms Embargo," *New York Times*, March 6, 2013, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/07/world/africa/somalia-arms-embargo-partly-lifted-by-un-security-council.html?ref=alshabab.

[2] The Associated Press, "22 Hostages on Hijacked Ship are Rescued in Somalia," *New York Times*, December 23, 2012, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/24/world/africa/22-hostages-on-hijacked-ship-are-rescued-in-somalia.html?ref=piracyatsea.

its music.

This project has two outcomes. The first is a senior honors thesis in the form of this manuscript. The second is a community engagement project in the form of an internet radio piece to be posted on SagalRadio.org at the end of March 2013. This engaged scholarship combines standard academic research endeavors and inclusion of views from the Somali community. Most importantly, it yields a final result that will benefit both the Somali community and the current body of literature on Somali music.

Little was known to the academic world about Somali oral traditions or music until the groundbreaking work of the Italian scholar Francesco Giannattasio (see Giannattasio 1983, 1988, 1988, 1996). Beginning in the 1980s Giannattasio studied the relationship between meter and text in traditional genres of sung poetry. In the same decade, John Johnson began detailing the development of *heello-hees* from traditional forms (see Johnson 1972, 1974, 1988, 1996, 2010). Journals emerging within the last decade, such as *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, have included articles about how Somalis view their music and cultural production. Particularly useful are interviews with important figures in Somali music, such as Abdullahi Qarshe (1924-1994),[3] in which they discuss their art form. While these publications represent a basis for the study of Somali music, the literature remains somewhat sparse. This study of music in the diaspora addresses an emerging and important part of Somali culture while adding to the body of literature on the topic. Previous studies by scholars such as Giannattasio have included brief transcriptions, Somali music has not been widely notated and an oral system of transmission has been preserved. Although the complete transcriptions are not

[3] Mohamed-Rashid Sheikh Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 2 (2008): 69.

included in this study, emphasis on the music of the Somali diaspora and short transcribed musical examples provide insight to an understudied section of Somali culture.[4] Focusing on cultural production may perhaps help the American communities, within which the Somali diaspora has settled, to better understand their new residents and ease the difficulties caused by immigration such as racism, Islamaphobia, language barriers, and the traumas of refugee status.[5]

This project deals only with the Somali diaspora in North America, specifically the communities in Atlanta and Minneapolis, where I conducted fieldwork. Minneapolis is the most popular destination for Somali immigrants, who typically have family or friends in the city, and it has become a center of Somali-American life due to "employment prospects and established refugee service agencies."[6] In Atlanta I attended a Somali wedding and spoke with members of the community about their musical tastes. I received an undergraduate research grant from Scholarly Inquiry and Research at Emory (SIRE) to travel with Hussien Mohamed, my community liaison, to Minneapolis between January 4-8, 2013. I spent three days in the community interviewing a variety of individuals. The majority of my fieldwork was conducted at Somali malls in Minneapolis (shown below in Figures 1.1-1.2),[7] which are the heart of the community.[8] Here Somali business owners are centralized, and community members interact and purchase new music from local studios. Studios sell CDs and videos, and may also have a room

[4] I use short transcriptions of music and excerpts of lyrics, adhering to fair use copyright rules.
[5] Leslie C. Moore and Laura Joseph, "The Ohio State University K-12 Teacher Somali Workshop Project," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 11 (2012): 136.
[6] Franklin Goza, "The Somali Diaspora in the United States: A Socio-economic and Demographic Profile," in *From Mogadishu to Dixon: The Somali Diaspora in a Global Context*, ed. Abdi M. Kuso and Stephanie R. Bjork (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc. 2007), 261.
[7] Photographs by author, January 4, 2013.
[8] Moore, "The Ohio State University K-12 Teacher Somali Workshop Project," 141.

attached with a synthesizer for recording. In addition to conducting interviews with shoppers and business owners in Minneapolis, I appeared on a local Somali program and spoke about my thesis, while Hussien promoted his Atlanta based radio program.

Figure 1.1. Karmel Mall, Minneapolis, MN.

Figure 1.2. Shops at Karmel Mall, Minneapolis, MN.

As I was beginning my research Hussien informed me that Somalis would be happy to teach me about their culture, especially valued traditions such as music. Ahmed Ismail Samatar, a professor at Macalester College in Minneapolis, told me that, "The greatest tragedy of Somali culture is that it is unknown" to the rest of the world.[9] The Somali oral and poetic tradition is little known outside their community, but greatly valued within. Poetry is understood to be the greatest skill Somalis possess, one that is

[9] Ahmed Ismail Samatar, interview by Erica Jordan, Minneapolis, MN, January 5, 2013.

worthy of "sharing with the rest of humanity."[10] In the mid-twentieth century traditional sung poetry forms developed into the modern *heello-hees* form (discussed in Chapter III), on which artists in the diaspora have built. This thesis attempts to share the Somali poetic musical tradition as it develops in the new context of the diaspora with those outside of the Somali heritage.

Music and identity can never be separated. Music is at once a personal experience and an outward representation of the self. Somalis distinguish themselves as traditional or modern through their musical choices. This thesis looks at how the Somali community has changed throughout space and time in new contexts and how individuals navigate this changing geographical and cultural landscape.[11] Some individuals choose to support new hybrid forms and assimilation as an expression of their changing consciousness and evolving Somali-American identity, while others attempt to remain connected to their heritage through traditional Somali cultural forms, such as *heello-hees* from the twentieth century.

Many Somalis in the diaspora see their contemporary music as lacking in meaning or poetic skill. They believe that *heello-hees* is "on the verge of dying in tangent with the disintegration of its own nation."[12] I hope to demonstrate that the Somali tradition of expressing oneself orally, through poetic song, is not dying, but rather evolving in a new context. I argue that this phenomenon has occurred in the past, with the development of *heello-hees* itself during the emergence of the new Somali nation. Music is ever evolving,

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[10] Yusuf, Ahmed Ismail. "Somali Heeso (Songs): A lethal weapon in the War of Ogaden Region in 1977," Forthcoming (2012): 1.
[11] Ahmed Samatar, "Battling on Two Fronts: Introducing Maryan Omar Ali," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 9 (2011): 20.
[12] Yusuf, "Somali Heeso (Songs): A lethal weapon in the War of Ogaden Region in 1977," 3.

that is, today's "traditional" was once a new form. *Heello-hees* and contemporary musician K'Naan Warsame are both "modern" when compared to sung poetry of the 19th century, but they are "worlds apart as far as the youth of the Somali diaspora are concerned."[13] Chapters III and IV form the core of this thesis, dealing specifically with the development of musical genres and the interactions between traditional and modern forms of Somali music. Chapter III briefly discusses the poetic forms that came before *heello-hees*, along with important figures and the cultural and political contexts that led to the development of *heello-hees*, to show how every generation creates new forms of expressions and understandings of self. Chapter IV examines the work and context of the contemporary artists in the diaspora in comparison with *heello-hees*.

When I began my research, I hypothesized the divide in musical taste and identity would be both geographic and generational. I anticipated music in the diaspora to be highly distinguishable from both the traditional music and contemporary music produced today in Somalia. I thought younger generations, especially second-generation Somalis in America, would be attracted to more hybrid musical forms that blend popular American music with their Somali heritage, since these forms may better express the challenges they face in navigating a complex cultural landscape.

In some ways, my work confirmed these hypotheses, but I found that not all geographical and generational differences defined musical taste. Rather generations manifested themselves in understandings of what it means to be Somali and recognitions of valuable Somali cultural productions. Musical practices do not differ so much based on where in the diaspora individuals are located, but rather with which generation they

[13] Moore, "The Ohio State University K-12 Teacher Somali Workshop Project," 142.

choose to identify. Both old and young recognize the traditional emphasis on poetry and story telling in the new music of the diaspora, but older Somalis also view new music as purely entertainment and separate from the artistic heights of traditional *heello-hees*. Identification with a generation group (i.e. traditional or modern musical taste) is not purely based on age, but is also based on whether or not one wants to identify with a group that is merging with new surroundings or one that preserves Somali cultural heritage.

There is, however, a trend of older individuals wanting to preserve their heritage and younger individuals wanting to embrace new forms. Age, location, interaction with other cultures, and choice define one's Somaliness in the diaspora. The contemporary examples analyzed in Chapter IV provide a glimpse at the new musical languages, and therefore examples of new identities, being formed. Specifically, works by K'Naan Warsame and Ahmed Yare exemplify two different musical languages used by artists in the diaspora. While both K'Naan and Yare are members of the younger generation, and create contemporary music, they represent two different groups and therefore two different manifestations of Somali American identity.

My detailed musical analysis of lyrics, structure, instrumentation, rhythm, melody, and vocal techniques within a historical and cultural context provide examples of how Somali music has changed. Close readings and musical analysis of one traditional song, "Lumumba" by Qarshe, and two contemporary pieces from the diaspora, "Hoobaale" by K'Naan and "Masaafo" by Yare, will demonstrate these changes and retentions. I will argue that the most significant musical changes in the diaspora involve rhythm and instrumentation, and also that changes in modern Somali society can be

traced "through popular songs"[14] and the changes therein. Therefore, regardless of an individual's opinion of emerging Somali popular music, it is a means of understanding the trajectory of Somali society, culture, and identity.

[14] Samatar, "Battling on Two Fronts: Introducing Maryan Omar Ali," 26.

CHAPTER II:

A MODERN HISTORY OF SOMALIA: COLONIZATION, CIVIL WAR, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIASPORA

Somalia is no stranger to political turmoil. Yet, as I briefly trace the historical and political events that caused the 1990 Civil War and the resulting emigration, I will show how music helped unify the people and give them hope. Understanding the historic context of the diaspora helps to understand the new and varying identities that manifest in Somali music today.

In the middle of the 19th century Somalia fell victim to a rising colonial culture, following the Berlin Conference of 1884 and the "Scramble for Africa."[15] In a long series of wars and treaties Great Britain, Italy, France, and Ethiopia competed for power and control in the Horn of Africa. Colonization began with "contractual alliances"[16] between the colonial powers and clan leaders or chiefs. Before the imperial partition between these colonial powers, there was no single political unit known as a Somali nation, though culture and language historically connected the nomadic pastoralist groups in the area. Somalia is unique in the larger African context because "the people of Somalia constitute a single ethnic group." [17] There are, however, Somalis also in surrounding nations such as Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. During colonization, Somalia was split into three regions. The north was controlled by Great Britain, the south and east by Italy,

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[15] Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991).
[16] Ioan M. Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland: Culture, History, Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 46.
[17] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.

and the west by Ethiopia and France with connections with Russia. The exact boundaries shifted throughout the period, reflecting international affairs of the time. For example, Italy transferred control of a region in southwestern Somalia to Ethiopia in 1897 and the British transferred control of the Hawd to Ethiopia in 1954.[18]

A Muslim nation, Somalia has a long history of interaction with the Arab world. Many aspects of Arab culture are found in traditional Somali music, including language, religion, instrumentation, pitch sources, and vocal practices. These musical idioms will be discussed in more depth in Chapter III. Historically, Somalis valued traditions that "proclaim their descent from noble Arabian lineages."[19] In the beginning of the 20th century, noted poet Sayyid Muhammad Abdille Hassan led an effort against the Christian colonizers. Sayyid hoped to drive out the Christian invaders and "regain Somali independence,"[20] although Somalia as a nation had never before existed. Sayyid's 'holy war' ended in failure in 1920 and colonization continued in the region. Finally, in the summer of 1960, Somalia became a nation, after a long, hard-fought independence movement throughout the region. British Somaliland gained independence on June 26, 1960, uniting with Italian Somaliland on July 1, 1960. Although a fragile and uncertain unification, the Somali Republic was established. This new Somali Republic was based on the boundaries created during colonization and the political organization was an "entirely Eurocentric exercise" with no regard for the "highly decentralized nature of traditional Somali political institutions"[21] or appropriateness in the local setting. The move toward independence sparked a sense of Pan-Somalism, a desire to be unified as

[18] Yusuf, "Somali Heeso (Songs): A lethal weapon in the War of Ogaden Region in 1977," 2-9.
[19] Goza, *The Somali Diaspora in the United States: A Socio-economic and Demographic Profile*, 260.
[20] Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland: Culture, History, Society*, 29.
[21] Ibid., 34.

one nation with all ethnic Somalis together. The fledgling government subsequently fought to achieve this goal. During this time music united the Somali people and defined what constituted Somaliness (*Soomaalino)*. During the War of Ogaden (1977-78), Somali poets used *heeso* (songs) in particular, to combine Somalis in and out of the national borders in "an indistinguishable and inseparable unit."[22] Abdiqadir Hersi wrote a song in which he explained what it means to be Somali, proudly proclaiming his heritage and strength, saying, "I let no one to belittle me / I let no man to pat my head (in beguile) / to tether me / …I am a Somali."[23] He saw Somalis as an independent and strong unit. Pan-Somalism and nationalism continued to be an inspiration for musicians throughout history and music, and the *heello-hees* (popular professional music) form especially continued to provide a medium for expression of Pan-Somalism. *Heello-hees* has also been used historically to reference events outside of Somalia and even outside of Africa, comparing the plights of Somalis with those in other nations. For example, the lyrics "Look at Berlin, / all of you look! / A wall is splitting it / Look and be entertained,"[24] describe the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

Modern poetry and lyrics worked to "praise the Somalis as a whole,"[25] with no mention of clans or tribes. Leaders used music, such as the freedom song "Lumumba" written by Abdullahi Qarshe in the era of independence that will be closely analyzed in Chapter III, to bring people together in order to fight for a united cause. Songs were particularly useful because metaphors "had no trouble with the censors,"[26] and could

[22] Yusuf, "Somali Heeso (Songs): A lethal weapon in the War of Ogaden Region in 1977," 4.
[23] Ibid., 11.
[24] John W. Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Publications, 1974), 141-42.
[25] Ibid., 98.
[26] Ibid., 132.

therefore be used to convey hidden messages. Censorship has remained an issue throughout history in Somalia and the diaspora, though internet access combats the practice.

With their music, composers "diagnosed the rot that was eating away at society and tried to mobilize the hearts of all Somali individuals against it."[27] Pan-Somali sentiments caused tensions with neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia, the borders of which still included Somali communities. The USA, USSR, Italy, Egypt, China, and Western Germany all tried to assert their influence in the region in the 1960s. Tensions ultimately led to a Somali-Soviet agreement in 1963, in opposition to an offer from the American west.[28] Somali communities outside of the new national borders of Somalia remained separated. Under president Cabdi-Rashiid Cali Shar-Ma-Arke (elected in 1967), Mahhammed Hhaaji Ibraahiin Cigaal was named prime minister. Publically, he sought to rid Somalia of regionalism, but in reality attempted to quell tensions with neighboring countries "at the expense of the Pan-Somali Movement."[29] This denouncement of the Pan-Somali goals created unrest in the nation, resulting in a military coup in 1969. Muhammad Siad Barre became dictator of Somalia and remained in power until 1991, at which time the regime was overthrown and Somalia was split into fractured regions, resulting in violence and starvation throughout. The Civil War and subsequent struggles led to the large-scale emigration and the development of the diaspora. This process is discussed later in this Chapter. Power within Somalia has transferred hands many times since independence. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) came into being in

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[27] Maryan Omar Ali and Lidwien Kapteijns, "Hassan Sheikh Muumin: The Hoobal as Creator, Preserver, and Social Critic of the National Heritage," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 2 (2008): 129.
[28] Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland: Culture, History, Society*, 37.
[29] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 126.

2004, but the "political legitimacy" of this regime has been "rejected by many people in Somalia."[30] Al-Shabab emerged in 2005, "bringing together several different groups with different histories and objectives united in wanting to topple the TFG."[31]

In recent years, Somalia has faced drought, famine, "reduced household purchasing power," "large scale displacement," and "limitations on humanitarian access."[32] Al-Shabab controlled the areas most drastically hit by drought and food shortage. These problems emerged because of Al-Shabab's refusal to work with NGOs and political conflicts in the region preventing good environmental and agricultural practices. Some Somalis view force as the only remaining solution in Somalia, believing that as long as Al-Shabab is in control "Somalia will never know peace." [33] Political solutions and forceful removal of Al-Shabab could allow Somalis to "look forward to better days."[34] The international community should focus on deep-seated issues such as re-establishing peace and security in south and central Somalia.[35]

Music is a means of raising awareness about these problems on an international scale. K'Naan, a rapper in the diaspora who will be discussed in Chapter IV, uses music to support his mission to bring peace to Somalia. Music is particularly useful for young generations to voice their issues, despite their lack of power. K'Naan says that the Somali

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[30] "Somalia: To talk or not to talk to Al-Shabab," *IRIN*, October 10, 2011, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93930/SOMALIA-To-talk-or-not-to-talk-to-Al-Shabab.
[31] Ibid.
[32] "Famine spreads into Bay Region; 750,000 people face imminent starvation," Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit, last modified September 5, 2011, http://www.fsnau.org/in-focus/famine-spreads-bay-region-750000-people-face-imminent-starvation.
[33] "Somalia: To talk or not to talk to Al-Shabab," *IRIN*.
[34] Ibid.
[35] EJ Hogendoorn, "Somalia Famine and International Response," *Small Wars Journal*, August 7, 2011, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/somalia-famine-international-response.aspx.

youth are forgotten, and "currently have no future at all."[36] As will be seen in Chapter III, *heello-hees* was a new form created by the youth in a changing and unknown context. Likewise, contemporary music in the diaspora is the product of the younger generation and a result of their hybrid identity in contrast to traditional ideas about Somaliness.

Americans often view Somalis as militant Muslims because of Al-Shabab's connection to Al-Qaeda and their position on America's terrorist list.[37] A common perception of Al-Shabab is one of children warriors and extreme violence. An Al-Shabab leader said that, "children should use one hand for education and the other for a gun to defend Islam."[38] Violence in this sense is promoted in the name of Islam.[39] Approaching the violence in Somalia in this way frames Somali culture in a backward or barbaric light. Using children, religion, and violence together paints a dark picture of Somalia in the eyes of a western audience, one that does not acknowledge the valuable and respected cultural production that has come from Somalis.

Despite continued political unrest, Somalia elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president on September 16, 2012. This administration is the first to be recognized by the United States since the Civil War. Although militant groups like Al-Shabab have been retreating from their strongholds, violence has not disappeared.[40] And with the separation of Somaliland and Puntland from the Somali Republic and large-scale emigration,

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[36] "Somalia: Work together to achieve recovery, agency urges," *IRIN,* September 28, 2011, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93836/SOMALIA-Work-together-to-achieve-recovery-agency-urges.
[37] "Somalia: To talk or not to talk to Al-Shabab," *IRIN*.
[38] Jeffrey Gettleman, "First Prize for a Child in Somalia: An AK-47," *New York Times*, September 20, 2011, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/world/africa/shabab-gives-unusual-prizes-for-somali-children-in-contest.html?_r=0.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibrahim Mohammed and Jeffrey Gettleman, "Popular Restaurant is hit by Bomb in Somali Capital," *New York Times*, February 16, 2013, accessed on March 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/17/world/africa/bomb-strikes-mogadishu-at-beachside-restaurant.html?ref=alshabab.

Somalia continues to be divided.

The Development of the Somali Diaspora

The historical events described above led to the development of a diaspora, or immigrant communities outside of Somalia. This diaspora is made up of Somalis who vary widely by gender, age, and profession. The Somali Civil War, continued socioeconomic struggles, lack of economic resources and opportunities, and environmental hardships such as drought have all contributed to the growing Somali diaspora in the United States and throughout the world.

By 2004 more than "56,000"[41] Somali refugees had entered the United States. The vast majority of these refugees arrived after the start of the Civil War, between 1990-2000.[42] These numbers are, of course, estimates, as many Somalis residing in the U.S. are missed by the census because they are assumed to be African American, live in lower class inner-city neighborhoods, or are "fearful of government officials."[43] Regardless of the exact numbers, it is clear that Somali populations in the United States are only increasing.

Tensions often arise between immigrant communities and American neighborhoods; these include issues with landlords, difficulties finding employment, and various other forms of discrimination. Better cultural understanding and respect could alleviate some tensions as these Somali communities emerge within American

[41]The statistics used here come from Franklin Goza's analysis of the 2000 Census. There has not been such a comprehensive analysis done on the 2010 Census, but based on trends we can assume that the number is only increasing.
[42] Goza, *The Somali Diaspora in the United States: A Socio-economic and Demographic* Profile, 256.
[43] Ibid., 258.

neighborhoods. However, cultural understanding is complicated by the fact that a variety of individuals, and therefore definitions of Somaliness, reside within these emerging communities. For instance, members of the older generation believe that Somalis must function as they did in Somalia. They must be religiously devout, wear appropriate dress, and listen to traditional and representative Somali music. On the other hand, the younger generation may define themselves as Somali American, and incorporate their Somali identity within their new American context, such as listening to both traditional music and American hip-hop.

Individuals in the diaspora can be placed into one of three basic subgroups of Somali immigrants and refugees. The first contains those born in Somalia who immigrated to the United States. These individuals may have immigrated for work or education, or they could be refugees seeking asylum in America. The second subgroup is made up of those who were not born in Somalia, but "indicated their primary ancestry was Somali."[44] This group contains second generation Somalis who are negotiating a new identity within a Somali-American context. These children of immigrants are the youngest Somalis living in the diaspora, and they perhaps affect the greatest change in Somali culture and artistic production, such as music. The third group consists of those who are not Somali by heritage, but whose "primary language"[45] is Somali. They may come from surrounding countries such as Kenya or Ethiopia and be a member of a clan or kinship group that intersects with Somali national borders. Secondary migration between American cities, due to factors such as housing or employment, also affects the

[44] Goza, *The Somali Diaspora in the United States: A Socio-economic and Demographic Profile*, 257.
[45] Ibid.

demographics of the diaspora.[46]

The age of the Somali American population has the greatest consequences for the cultural changes in the diaspora. This younger generation is redefining what it means to be Somali in contrast to their parents' definition, which has implications for the kinds of music consumed and produced, as I will discuss in Chapter IV. That is, a new definition of Somaliness will result in new musical production and changing musical tastes. This age bracket is described as "young enough to successfully adapt"[47] into their new multi-cultural environment, drawing on aspects of both Somali and American culture. It is still unclear exactly what aspects of Somali culture will change in the future as the immigrant communities change, but music is certainly one form that rapidly reflects changes as they occur. I argue that generational differences in terms of musical consumption and understanding are more important than location. That is, contemporary musical practices do not differ so much based on where in the diaspora individuals are located, but rather with which generation they identify. Chapter IV reveals how both traditional and modern musical tastes exist in immigrant communities. Here I examine how the multitude of definitions of Somaliness are manifested in the music being produced and consumed within the diaspora, and how music can be an active agent in creating new identities.

Poetry, which is generally sung, has long played a significant role in Somali culture and continues to do so in the diaspora. Since the Somali language was not written down until 1972, oral poetry was historically a means of effective and valued communication. Poetry is not just an artistic expression of the individual, but the

[46] Moore, "The Ohio State University K-12 Teacher Somali Workshop Project," 142.
[47] Goza, *The Somali Diaspora in the United States: A Socio-economic and Demographic Profile*, 261.

"collective tongue of a pressure group"[48] used for peace or war, with more efficiency and ease as technology improved. The ability to write and perform good poetry is a "major device for raising one's status"[49] in Somali society. Radio broadcasting and the evolution of oral poetry into song have worked to maintain and increase the significance of this cultural tradition. Radio broadcasting, which began in the British Protectorate in the 1940s and spread to teashops and private homes,[50] has affected the structure, performance, transmission, and preservation of Somali poetry. Radio continues to be an important medium in the diaspora today and communities rely on radio programming not only for music and cultural consumption, but to inform them of social, political, and health issues in the diaspora. My community contact, Hussien, runs Sagal Radio, a great example of radio programming for the benefit of the community. The exact ways in which radio has transformed poetry and music will be explained in more depth in Chapter III. Poetry is valued not only within the Somali nation, but in the diaspora as well. It is with this tradition that I begin my analysis of traditional Somali popular music.

[48] Ioan M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2002), 5.
[49] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 53.
[50] Ibid., 49.

CHAPTER III:

SONGS OF WISDOM: POPULAR MUSICAL TRADITIONS IN SOMALIA

Music and poetry have long been central to Somali life and culture.[51] This chapter tracks the development of the particular musical genre *heello-hees* that emerged after World War II from more traditional forms of Somali sung poetry. The use of musical accompaniment and the ability of musicians to make their livings as artists in a "professional atmosphere"[52] set *heello-hees* apart from more traditional genres. In addition, those involved in the industry held specialized roles. That is, poets, musicians, and singers worked together to produce new songs. For these reasons, traditional and modern forms can also be categorized as nonprofessional and professional musical forms, respectively. Prior to the establishment of a music industry in Somalia, poets were members of the community with a particular skill, but not able to devote their lives solely to their art. In this Chapter, I discuss the traditional forms that led to *heello-hees*, examine one representative composer of the *heello-hees* genre, Abdullahi Qarshe, and analyze his song "Lumumba" according to text, structure, rhythm, vocal style, pitch source and melody.

Traditional Poetry Genres

Traditional Somali music draws more on Arabic musical characteristics than other African forms. Cultural interaction and physical proximity result in instrumental, vocal,

[51] Samatar, "Battling on Two Fronts: Introducing Maryan Omar Ali," 24.
[52] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 180.

and harmonic commonalities. Traditional Somali music is based on sung poetry, traditionally accompanied by a simple drum. Rhythmic accompaniment, such as foot stamping or hand clapping is also common, but not necessary in poetic performance. A variety of drums and hand-held clappers can be found throughout the regions of Somalia. Animal horns, wood, and on the coast, seashells, can also be formed into rhythmic instruments.[53] As a traditionally nomadic people, Somalis created these instruments from materials in their environment and made them easily portable. In the 20th century the oud (*kaban*) and the six-stringed lyre (*shereero)* became important harmonic instruments. Traditional forms of Somali music use the pentatonic scale, a five-note scale without semitones. Somali music is not notated, but learned orally and therefore consists of "a large variance of pitch frequencies and intervals."[54] Poetry is typically performed as a chant or song with melody and rhythm. Melismas (a slide between notes) and vibrato (a rapid variation in pitch on a given note) characterize the vocal style. Somalis describe the best voices as sweet and effortless.

Traditional Somali music shares many characteristics with Islamic literary traditions and the recitation of the Quran. Specifically notable is segmentation and the use of repeated refrains.[55] Improvisatory style, oral transmission, solo performances, and lack of instrumentation are particularly important in Quranic recitation. Some styles resemble normal speech, while others are more embellished and melodic. The melodic contour of this music is similar to traditional Somali music, and also includes repeated notes and upward leaps or intervals, usually over a 3rd or a 4th. Similar to the reciting tones in

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[53] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.
[54] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 71.
[55] Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, "Structural Segments in the Islamic Arts: The Musical 'Translation' of a Characteristic of the Literary and Visual Arts," *Asian Music* 16, no. 1 (1985): 64.

traditional Somali music, as will be exemplified in "Lumumba," Islamic melodies return to resting tones or points of "stability in the modal"[56] pitch source. Arabic music draws from a complicated modal system, in which dozens of modes can be used to express different moods. The mode of a song dictates what pitches will be used and which pitches will be important melodically. A particular Arabic mode can be described as an outline for improvisation, or a guideline within which a melody is constructed.[57] Musical recitations are embellished and "melismatic, i.e., they frequently employ multiple pitches for a single syllable."[58] Melismas are essential to traditional Somali music.

The text is central to the performance, as it is really a recitation of religious poetry rather than a piece of music. Because of its religious value, reciting the Quran was a "respected"[59] skill, just as poetry composition and performance in Somali society. On the other hand, musicians do not hold high status in society and secular music was considered the "pastime of those who indulged in forbidden practices."[60] The solo nature of recitation stems from the belief that vocal ensembles or musical accompaniment "obscure the meaning of the text."[61] When discussing traditional music, Somalis talk about how the accompaniment must support the voice, highlighting, but not overpowering the poetic message.

Rhythmic patterns of Somali poetry are not dictated by syllable, but by vowel length. Generally long notes will occur in music when long vowels occur in the scansion

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[56] Ibid., 65.
[57] Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus, and Dwight Reynolds, *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 6: The Middle East* "The Concept of Mode in Iranian Music" 2001, accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/329994.
[58] Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, "The Cantillation of the Qu'ran," *Asian Music* 19, no. 1 (1987): 9.
[59] Ibid., 17.
[60] Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, "The Status of Music in Muslim Nations: Evidence from the Arab World," *Asian Music* 12, no. 1 (1980): 59.
[61] Faruqi, "The Cantillation of the Qu'ran," 8.

of the poetry, likewise with short notes and short vowels. [62] Rules in traditional poetry classes dictate how many syllables can be in a given line of poetry. Linguists refer to the duration of vowels as *moras*, or units that determine stress or timing. Scholars like Giannattosio have analyzed and written about these rules, but Somalis understand them implicitly.[63] Similar to rhyming, Somali poetry uses uniform alliteration to connect sections of a poem. Each line within a given work must contain the same letter or "alliterating sound."[64] This technique must be used throughout the entire poem.

In the Somali tradition, poetry and music are not distinct forms, as all "poetry can be sung."[65] Thus genres preceding *heello-hees* are categorized according to their poetic style, rather than their musical style. Traditional poetry can be separated into three classes, poetry (*gabay*), work song (*hees*), and dance (*cayaar*). A given form can be identified by scansion, melody, topic, or function, which "change according to the genres and the styles."[66] Although styles varied among poets, individuals tended to use the same style of a given genre.

Gabay is a serious, classical from of poetry to be recited. The genre deals with politics, war, peace, social debate, inter-clan negotiations, and philosophy and is performed in serious situations, rather than casual social gatherings. *Gabay* are very long

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[62] John W. Johnson, "Musico-Moro-Syllabic Relationships in the Scansion of Somali Oral Poetry," *African Languages and Cultures Supplement 3* (1996): 73, 77.
[63] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.
[64] Francesco Giannattasio and Giorgio Banti, "Music and Metre in Somali Poetry," *African Languages and Cultures Supplement 3* (1996): 84.
[65] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/26174?print=true.
[66] Giannattasio, "Music and Metre in Somali Poetry," 88.

and require alliteration of one consonant per poem and "scansion is tight and unified."[67] Sayyid Abdullah Hassan, noted for his poetry against the colonials, composed *gabay*.[68] The ability to memorize and recite *gabay* is as valued as the skills of composing and writing this poetry.

Heeso, or work songs, have specific functions, depending on the action being done during the performance or singing (i.e. watering cattle, driving camels, etc). One example is "maqasha," or "baby caprine," sung by Cibaado Jaamac Faarax.[69] Some forms are complex and "memorized verbatim for public performance" while others are "simpler in structure and rhythm," performed during daily actions.[70] Though the name of this genre, *hees*, is similar to the genre at the center of this study, *heello-hees*, they are distinct forms. *Hees* is simply the Somali word for song. The third traditional class is *cayaar* or dance songs. This class is the most musically complex and "composition is simultaneous with performance" [71] so there are few repeated lines or refrains.

Transition to *Heello-Hees*

The three poetry forms and Arabic influences discussed above formed the basis for the development of *heello-hees* or the Somali professional music that emerged after World War II in 1945. This form marks the beginning of the popular Somali music with which my research is concerned, and Somalis in the diaspora today consider this form to be 'traditional' music. The transition to *heello-hees* from more traditional forms like

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[67] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.
[68] Johnson, "Musico-Moro-Syllabic Relationships in the Scansion of Somali Oral Poetry," 78.
[69] Johnson, "Musico-Moro-Syllabic Relationships in the Scansion of Somali Oral Poetry," 79.
[70] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.
[71] Ibid.

gabay, hees, and *cayaar* introduced foreign instruments (including electric guitar, organ, and western drum sets), unique melodic and rhythmic patterns for every poem,[72] and the establishment of an industry in which composers and musicians occupied professional roles.

Belwo emerged between 1942-1945 as a very short (approximately two lines) form of poetry created by Abdi Deeqsi in the urban society of Burame.[73] The genre employed drum accompaniment and was performed by young men and women at social gatherings.[74] *Belwo* became a popular way of expressing nationalist sentiments, because it was not constrained by its form like the traditional poetry classes. Religious powers, and probably colonial powers, viewed the new form as innovative,[75] transformed the very term *belwo* into *Balaayo* or evil, and attempted to repress production. Because of this repression, artists and intellectuals began referring to the genre as *Heello*. They recognized that the work by those like Qarshe had "developed Somali literature and art in general."[76] Artists strung multiple *belwos* together, incorporating them in a larger structure connected by repeated refrains. This new structure became the genre, *heello-hees*. The repeating line or refrain pattern was a "systematic device"[77] in the composition of *heello-hees*, and the technique can still be heard in contemporary Somali songs today.

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[72] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/26174?print=true.
[73] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 52.
[74] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 70.
[75] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 69.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 73.

Heello-hees gained popularity because it enabled everyone, especially younger men and women, "to have a voice in politics"[78] and served as a good tool in mobilizing political movements. Hidden meanings allowed people to voice their concerns without being constrained by censorship and women had more freedom to perform in public. The new form combined traditional oratory skills with music and melody to lure audiences to a particular mission. *Heello-hees* has always been a "medium under the control of the youths"[79] and musical production in the diaspora continues to be dominated by the youth.

Heello-hees themes primarily revolve around love or politics. Somalis acquainted with *heello-hees* comment specifically on the use of metaphor and the power of the words to invoke emotions or provoke actions from the audience. When discussing music they first mention the importance of a story or message and the wisdom in every song. While the traditional *gabay*, *hees*, and *cayaar* contained "veiled political and social commentary,"[80] lyrics in early *heello-hees* directly state their meaning. Rather than hide criticism after the country's independence, *heello-hees* artists targeted the administration that "was made up of Somalis themselves."[81] Hassan Sheikh Muumin stands out as one of Somalia's greatest songwriters. Born in 1930, he, along with Abdullahi Qarshe, belonged to the generation that created modern Somali music. Hassan worked for Radio Mogadishu after independence and wrote plays and poetry, whose words were set to music. He, like most artists, occupied a role as "social commentator and critic."[82] For example, Hassan's song "How Disgusting is a Black woman" (*Cakuye Naag Madow*) is

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[78] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.
[79] Ibid.
[80] *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 1: Africa*, s.v. "Music and Poetry in Somalia," accessed March 20, 2013, http://glnd.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/327197.
[81] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 106.
[82] Ali, "Hassan Sheikh Muumin: The Hoobal as Creator, Preserver, and Social Critic of the National Heritage," 121.

the story of a Somali man preferring a foreign white woman to his wife. In the end the man "begs his Somali wife to take him back."[83] Though a song about women and relationships, it can also be seen as a symbol of the fascination with the west and the growing tendency to adopt western cultural traits. The ending reinforces the message to preserve Somali culture.

Heello-hees musicians guided the Somali people with their art and social commentary during the transition to independence. Important artists of this time include Abdullahi Qarshe, Hassan Sheikh Muumin, Mohamed Saeed, Belaayo Cas, Hussein Aw Farah, Ali Sugul, and Omar Dhuule. These men, among others, reconciled "traditional values and customs with emerging definitions of modernity and sophistication."[84] The Somali people had an opportunity to define themselves in a new situation leading up to independence and, after 1960, in an independent nation. Music provided a means of expressing this new identity, and the government funded bands to create new music as a representation of the new Somalia. Unfortunately, these bands are no longer prominent today, both in Somalia due to a lack of government support, and in the diaspora due to a lack of funding and the physical separation of musicians.

Technological developments of the 1940s and 50s and the increasing influence of the media greatly affected the course of *heello-hees* as a musical form. The radio made music accessible, thus decreasing separation between urban and rural populations and increasing the reach of an artist or leader's voice. But, as was confirmed by my fieldwork, *heello* was not, and is not, spread and preserved only through technology, but

[83] Ibid., 125.
[84] Ali, "Hassan Sheikh Muumin: The Hoobal as Creator, Preserver, and Social Critic of the National Heritage," 129.

by "human memory"[85] as well. The older generations remember the text, context, and meaning of particular songs. One man spoke about the power of *heello-hees* during the war over the Ogaden region between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977. He said that he is still fighting that war today, remembering through the music. The practice of recording has affected the amount of variation and liberty that artists take when performing a piece. The "correct" version has been frozen on a tape, thus creating the "authentic"[86] version that everyone knows and wants. Still today older generations want to hear these recordings over new performances and assert judgment of covers onto new original music. Chapter IV will look more at how technology, mainly the internet, has changed the face of Somali music and how this development interacts with the cultivation of traditional forms by experts in the *heello* form and older generations.

Abdullahi Qarshe and the Evolution of *Heello-Hees*

Regarded as the "father of Somali music,"[87] Abdullahi Qarshe is the best representative of a *heello-hees* musician because of his public presence at a vital time in the development of popular, professional music in Somalia. He is particularly known for popularizing the Arabic oud as an accompaniment instrument, and he has received government and military awards for his work in the development and preservation of Somali culture.[88] Although many consider Abdullahi Qarshe to be the 'father of Somali music,' the composer rejects the position. He says that, "there was always Somali music:

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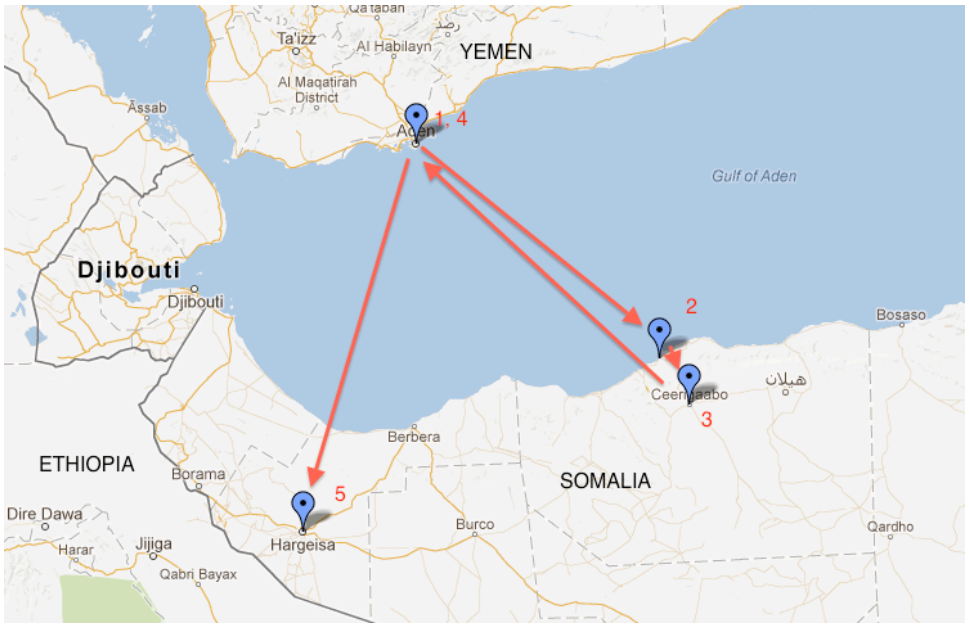
[85] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 179.
[86] Ibid., 178.
[87] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 76.
[88] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 82.

for weddings, lullabies, watering, animals, working, dancing…and exorcism."[89] It is clear however, that Qarshe played a vital role in the formation of *heello-hees*, creating the foundation for the popular music of today.

Biographical Background

Abdullahi Qarshe was born Mahmud Muhammad to a well-respected and deeply religious *muruud* (keepers of the shrine) family, in 1924. Though born in Tanzania, his roots were in the Sanaag region of British Somaliland. Upon his father's death in 1931, the family returned to Somaliland. They traveled first through Aden, Yemen then across the Gulf of Aden to Maydh and Cerigaabo in Sanaag (see map in Figure 3.1). They remained in Cerigaabo for approximately two years before settling again in Aden.

Figure 3.1. Map of Qarshe's Early Life.[90]



[89] Ibid., 80.
[90] Image created by Erica Jordan at maps.google.com.

Qarshe exemplifies how music easily crosses boundaries defined by maps. His fluid physical location during his upbringing exposed him to the music of various cultures, especially Indian and Arab, which subsequently influenced his musical style. As a boy Qarshe attended *madrasah* (Quranic school) where he was educated in the Islamic religion. Here he was introduced to the Arabic language and Quranic recitation, and remained connected to the Somali community in Aden. Upon completion of his Quranic studies, Qarshe attended a British school, but "became completely bored with formal learning and…more enticed by music."[91] As a self-taught musician, Qarshe was influenced more by the music of his surroundings than by traditional Somali sung poetry. For example, he listened to the local British radio and watched hours of Indian movies, "primarily to listen to the accompanying Indian songs."[92]

Musical Career

Abdullahi Qarshe cites Indian films and the beginning of radio broadcasts in Aden as the initiation of his musical career.[93] The Somali radiobroadcasts contained news and *gabay*, but no music. Arabs and Indians, whose broadcasts did include music, would visit Somali cafes and ask "'Don't you have your own music?'"[94] These questions inspired Qarshe to create a Somali music, incorporating foreign musical characteristics, such as rhythm and instrumentation, with Somali poetic traditions. The Qarshe family's role as *muruud* required them to maintain a reputation as devout Muslims in the community.

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[91] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 67.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

Musical training, which did not fit with the Muslim tradition, was "tantamount to blasphemy,"[95] and so Qarshe endeavored to start his musical career in secret.[96] He purchased an oud and eventually moved to Hargeisa in northern Somalia. He worked as a clerk for the British Protectorate while continuing his musical education.

In Hargeisa, Qarshe interacted with other artists, particularly *belwo* poets. Though still a beginner on the oud, Qarshe began to play with Ina Beenaale, an Indian musician, and Abdo Yusuf, a Yemeni musician. They formed a band with the goal to combine a softer version of Somali poetry with musical accompaniment. The early musical texture consisted of simple rhythmic clapping, drumming, and a tambourine. This collaboration did not last long, as Beenaale and Yusuf were worried that Qarshe would "steal the limelight from them" because he "was the first would-be Somali musician and composer,"[97] thus his nickname 'father of Somali music.'

Qarshe came of age musically while the Somali people were entering a "new phase of national consciousness,"[98] so his work parallels the young emerging Somali nation. He wrote his first composition, "*Ka Kacay! Ka Kacay!"* or "Wake Up! Wake Up!" in 1948, only a decade before independence. Though the beginning of his career in Hargeisa attempted to create softer lyrics, the political and social context inspired more politicized lyrics. In *"Ka Kacay! Ka Kacay!"* and many other compositions, he adopted the technique of stringing *belwos* together and embraced the forms nationalist sentiments. This work raised the status of *heello*, defining it as a "mouthpiece for the drive toward

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Faruqi, "The Cantillation of the Qu'ran," 17.
[97] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 68.
[98] Ibid.

independence."[99] "*Ka Kacay! Ka Kacay!"* clearly represents the emerging nationalist sentiments and desire to overtake the colonial powers. It was a reaction to the new post of Reece, a notoriously "oppressive colonial character"[100] in the National Frontier District (NFD), a colonial system of control. "*Ka Kacay! Ka Kacay!"* calls for the Somali people to stop being idle, saying "We have been defeated before / This is no time for joking / Our people have been killed / And the [colonials] have increased in number."[101]

Another Qarshe song from 1948, "*Garta naqa*" or "Sort out the Claims," also refers to the colonials. In this song Qarshe says, "Morning and afternoon I serve the infidels / And at night I remain sleepless / Make your own judgment."[102] Qarshe wants the Somali people to have an opinion or stance against the colonials, to realize the condition of their lives, and the position of their people. He uses the "woman" as a metaphor for the Somali nation by saying he is "overwhelmed by the love for this woman / But I am barred from her / Make your own judgment."[103] Qarshe and other artists and intellectuals have strong nationalist sentiments and deep feelings of longing for a Somali nation, yet it is out of reach. They want to serve the Somali people, rather than the foreign colonials who continue to constrain them. Qarshe wants his people to assess the situation and realize that they are supporting the enemy. In 1948 Qarshe requested to be transferred to another clerical position in order to participate in a police force musical group called "Band Boys" in Mandera. He says that "some people thought I had been

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[99] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 77.
[100] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 69.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 69.
[103] Ibid.

transferred as a punishment for my song '*Ka Kacaay! Ka Kacaay!*"[104] Censorship was not unknown to Somalia, during colonization the Civil War, or even now under Al-Shabab, and so some assumed Qarshe had been punished for anti-colonial expression.

Theater and Somali Music

After 1950 Abdullahi Qarshe decided to leave his government post and focus on his musical career. He moved his family to Hargeisa and began working as an administrator and broadcaster for Radio Hargeisa. In his spare time he wrote, practiced, and played with other musicians.[105] Qarshe, along with other professionals like Yusuf Ismail Samatar, took control of theater production, creating a professional industry that intersected with *heello-hees*.

Theater was a very important in the development of Somali modern music, as the platform to premier new songs. The stage provided "outlet and impetus" [106] for modern poetry. This period is significant because it is a time of new cultural production. Each new play consisted of a greater number of original songs. The artists created new forms with new content connected to the past, present, and future. Important figures involved in theater included Mohammed Ahmed, Omar Dhuule, Ahmed Ali Dararamle, Hasan Geni, Abdullahi Jama Magalo, and Hussein Aw Farah. Those involved in theater were also heavily involved in the development of *heello-hees* and the professional popular music industry.

In 1955 Qarshe formed the theater group *Walaalo Hargeisa* (The Hargeisa Brothers). Qarshe and *Walaalo Hargeisa* introduced new instruments to the genre of

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 72.
[106] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 179.

belwo and the early *heello*. Among them were the tambourine (daf), the oud, and the flute (*biibiile*), guitar, violin, and organ were also incorporated.[107] They aimed to elevate Somali music to a new realm of artistic production and were largely defined by the strong nationalist context, striving to create the best-imagined Somalia. "*Dugsiyada Ogaada u Aada*" (Be Alert to Education and Go to School!) (1960s), says, "Let us open our eyes to the wonder of knowledge, and let us be the most educated and civilized![108] By the 1960s, *heello-hees* was so valued and revered that it replaced "the *gabay* in urban and elite societies."[109] *Walaalo Hargeisa* served as an inspiration as the form gained popularity and prestige, and more poets began to practice the modern method of composition.

Walaalo Hargeisa produced their first play, entitled *Soomaalidii Hore iyo Soomaalidii Dambe* (Somalis of the Past and Somalis of the Present), in 1955, when the Hawd was transferred to Ethiopian control. A "lamentation of this dreadful event" and similar situations in other colonized regions, *Walaalo Hargeisa* intended to "inform the audience about how the Somalis in the past fought for their country."[110] *Heello*-heeso again proved to be "the most effective weapon"[111] when Somalia and Ethiopia were in full-scale war over the Ogaden region in 1977.

Rather than ignoring traditional poetic subject matter like love and romance, Qarshe and *Walaalo Hargeisa* sought to produce a play that would "combine love and Pan-Somali sentiments"[112] in order to invigorate the fight for independence and

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[107] Ibid., 71.
[108] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 77.
[109] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 78.
[110] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 74.
[111] Yusuf, "Somali Heeso (Songs): A lethal weapon in the War of Ogaden Region in 1977," 3.
[112] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 74.

unification, while still being familiar and connected to the past. For Example, *Cartan iyo Ceebla* (Artan and Ebla), tells of forbidden love and deals with "tradition, parental powers, and individual autonomy."[113] *Isa Seeg* (Mutual Miss) related a story of "pretensions and deception."[114] Metaphors in these plays become significant when understood politically. In *Isa Seeg,* the line "Between two horrible options, I am condemned to choose" [115] references an election in Djibouti in 1958, in which the public voted between independence and the continuation of French occupation. Both options were 'horrible,' signifying the difficult transition that all emerging African nations faced and with which Somalis could identify.

Qarshe identifies *Kibiroow! Kab iga Xurr!* (Oh Ingratitude! You have turned me into a pauper!) (ca. 1959) as the most important play performed by *Walaalo Hargeisa*. It is about a family that is "corrupted and then destroyed by the influence of an intruder who used self-serving intrigue and deception."[116] This is a strong metaphor for the state of Somalis and the role that colonization and foreign European powers played in creating the context. The power of theater and poetry in Somali society can be seen clearly in *Walaalo Hargeisa's* production of *Gardiid waa Alla diid* (He who Refuses Justice, Refuses Allah). During 1960 elections the play's songs correctly predicted, and perhaps influenced the victory of Aden Abdullah Osman Daar, Somalia's first President. Artists and musicians, such as Qarshe and his group, were involved in all aspects of politics, supporting various movements and missions through their lyrics. Osman Mohamed and

[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 75.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 76.

Ali Fayrus supported the National United Front (NUF), while Qarshe and others supported the Somali National League (SNL) and the United Somali Party (USP).[117]

Music can be a quiet commentator and reflection of a situation, whether political or cultural, and was a means of expression for all Somalis regardless of group affiliation. Hassan Muumin, an important composer mentioned earlier, was weary of military control and warned the Somali people in song to "beware of throwing a stone into the fire! And beware of bringing clannism into the [workings of] the independent [state]!"[118] Unfortunately, society did not heed his warnings, in fact many Somalis initially supported the military coup of 1969, as represented in Qarshe's lyrics, "Let it be…We needed our armed forces…Celebrate the good news."[119] The reality, however, was not positive and Qarshe soon began writing music against the military oppression, such as "*Ma Allaah baday suuqu madow, Ma Allaah baday"* (Did Allah condemn us to this dark alley, did Allah condemn us?).[120] His messages were strong and clear and many of his last songs were banned by Radio Mogadishu. While in political exile, Qarshe declared that evil had "vanquished the good."[121] Maryan Omar Ali, a collector and scholar of Somali music, says that the "pulverization" of Somalia could have been prevented, if only they had "listened attentively to the warnings"[122] of artists like Hassan Muumin. The themes and messages of Qarshe's work describe the political and cultural state of Somalia between the establishment of an independent nation and the Civil War.

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ali, "Hassan Sheikh Muumin: The Hoobal as Creator, Preserver, and Social Critic of the National Heritage," 122.
[119] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 82.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 83.
[122] Samatar, "Battling on Two Fronts: Introducing Maryan Omar Ali," 24.

Musical Characteristics of *Heello-Hees*

We have seen how *heello-hees* developed in the 1940s out of older poetic forms such as *gabay, hees, cayaar,* and especially *belwo,* and by following Abdullahi Qarshe's career, how it became a political tool. Now we look specifically at the musical characteristics of this song form, focusing on structure, text, instrumentation, rhythm, vocal style, and melody. As described earlier, *heello-hees* is built with a series of *belwos*, or short 2-line poems. Lines of text are often repeated with the same melody and rhythm, creating refrains, which serve to lengthen the song. Thus the basic structure is alternating refrain and short stanza, or *belwo*. This technique of incorporating *belwo* poems and repeating refrains is only a general guideline for *heello-hees* composers and there is no "rule"[123] or set form to which they must adhere. Musicians like Qarshe freely created the poetry, melody, and accompaniment in their own style, following only the basic structure. Soloists generally perform songs, though a male and or female chorus may sing during the refrain. These melodies are unique to each poem, in contrast to the standard patterns used in traditional poetry classes. The resulting repertoire of *heello-heeso* includes melodies that are "as varied and interesting as those in modern Western pop music."[124]

Despite the musical innovations in the *heello-hees* genre, the text continues to convey the essential meaning and so remains central to the song.[125] Texts are often passed on from one generation to the next with only new instrumental accompaniment being added. This practice occurred not only historically, but is also present in the diaspora, as memorization of a poem was a valued skill in traditional Somali society. Because the text is so vital to the art form, vocals are the focal point of all *heello-hees*

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[123] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 173.
[124] Ibid., 166.
[125] Ibid., 180.

music. The timbre or quality of the voice oscillates with flexibility. While the meslisma most dramatically illustrates this technique, really every note oscillates. The vocals waver around reciting tones, usually the fifth (dominant) or first (tonic) note of the scale, creating a sense of returning home. Melismas coincide with a jump or interval, usually a 4th or minor 3rd. The vibrato sensation coincides with long, sustained notes, such as at the peaks or ends of phrases or sub-phrases. These musical details are closely linked to the Islamic and Arabic traditions discussed earlier.

With the development of *heello-hees* by Qarshe and his contemporaries, instrumental accompaniment expanded. The introduction of many western instruments (electric guitar, strings, piano, organ, drum sets, etc) led to the use of entire orchestras, though the oud, traditional drums, and clappers remain essential to the Somali sound. These instrumental additions mark the major difference between traditional Somali sung poetry and the *heello-hees* form.

Heello-hees composers combine aspects of Somali heritage with modernization. Somali music cannot be viewed vertically, but must be understood as a horizontal landscape, with many variations. There is no single way to be Somali. Qarshe draws on his religious background and exposure to Arabic traditions, such as harmony, pitch fluctuation, and melisma. At the same time he goes against tradition, expanding instrumentation and singing about secular and political issues rather than religion. Likewise, artists in the diaspora combine Somali heritage and modernization in new ways, adding to the varied Somali cultural production.

Close Reading of "Lumumba" by Abdullahi Qarshe

Abdullahi Qarshe continued to write poignant and political songs during the 1960s, which was a time of experimentation in Somalia as the young nation faced newfound independence and self-governance. One song in particular, "*Lumumba Mana Noola Mana Dhiman"* "Lumumba is neither Alive nor Dead" from 1962, stands out as a strong representation of Qarshe's style and serves as an excellent example for analysis. Written after Somali independence and Qarshe's move to Mogadishu, the song elevated Qarshe to "new heights and status."[126]

"Lumumba's" text is concerned with the Prime Minister of Congo, Patrice Lumumba, who was assassinated by his opponents, despite U.N. intervention in 1962. (See lyrics below in Example 3.1). The Pan-African sentiments in "Lumumba" are an extension of the Somali independence movement's Pan-Somali sentiments. Though Pan-Somalism specifically reflects the unique ethnic homogeneity present in Somalia, this song "bears witness to strong Pan-Africanist feelings within the Somali Republic."[127] "Lumumba" was a very popular song, and it was broadcast on the radio throughout the decade. It exemplifies how the creation of modern Somali music was influenced not only by Somali culture, or even Arabic and Indian sound, but also by the political happenings throughout the rest of Africa and the world. While Somalis describe their music as poetic, with an underlying message that is not always apparent, Qarshe's lyrics for "Lumumba" are rather direct. Furthermore, his style has influenced such later musicians as K'Naan to be discussed in Chapter IV.

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[126] Hassan, "Interview with the late Abdullahi Qarshe (1994) at the Residence of Obliqe Carton in Djibouti," 78.
[127] Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy: The Development of the Genre Heello in Modern Somali Poetry*, 119.

Example 3.1. Lyrics of "Lumumba" in Somali with English Translation.[128]

Refrain: Lamumba ma noola, mana dhimaney, Labadaa midna haw maleynina ey, Muuqiisoo La waayay mooyaaney, Inuu maqanyahay ha moodina ey,	Refrain: Lumumba is neither living nor dead. Do not imagine that [he is in] either of the two [conditions] Although people have failed to find his person, Do not imagine that he is absent.
Belwo III: Madawgu giddi waa idinla meeloo, Ogobey manta waa mid ka gudhahey,	*Belwo* III: All black people are on the same side with you. Alas! Today he is the one [whose milk] has been cut off [from us].

"Lumumba" follows the overall structure of a classic *heello-hees*, alternating Refrain (A) with four stanzas or *Belwos* (B), representative of the tradition of stringing *belwos* together in order to form longer *heello*. The formal structure of the song is diagramed with time markings below as a listening guide in Figure 3.2. An instrumental introduction played by the oud outlines the rhythms used throughout the song. The duet of male and female voices sings the Refrain, which repeats four times throughout "Lumumba," alternating with textual variations of the B sections. The song ends with a modified A section, without an interlude.

[128] Ibid.

Figure 3.2. Formal Structure of "Lumumba."[129]

INTRO	A		B^1	A		B^2
Introduction	Refrain	Interlude	Belwo 1	Refrain	Interlude	Belwo 2
00:00-00:23	00:23-1:00		1:00-1:14	1:14-1:50		1:50-2:03
	00:23-00:50	00:50-1:00		1:14-1:40	1:40-1:50	
Instrumental Accompaniment (Oud, drums, clapper)	Duet	Instrumental Accompaniment	Male solo	Duet	Instrumental Accompaniment	Male solo

A		B^3	A		B^4	A'
Refrain	Interlude	Belwo 3	Refrain	Interlude	Belwo 4	Refrain
2:03-2:37		2:37-2:50	2:50-3:24		3:24-3:38	3:38-4:08
2:03-2:29	2:29-2:37		2:50-3:17	3:17-3:24		
Duet	Instrumental Accompaniment	Male solo	Duet	Instrumental Accompaniment	Male solo	Duet

"Lumumba" employs male and female voices, and the accompaniment includes the oud, drums, and a clapper. In typical *heello-hees* style, the duet of voices sings the Refrain, while solo male voice sings the verses or *belwos*. In the first Refrain the male voice enters, followed shortly by the female voice, doubling the part an octave higher. All other refrains begin immediately with both voices, again separated by an octave. The accompaniment remains in the background, supporting the voice.

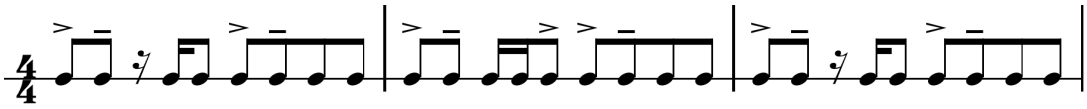
The accompaniment instruments emphasize the strong beats 1 and 3 in 4/4 meter. All instruments and voices play or sing a version or variation of a primary rhythmic pattern throughout the piece (see Example 3.2 below). The variations only slightly alter the rhythm by adding or removing subdivisions while maintaining the emphasis on strong beats. For instance, sometimes the accompaniment instruments play eighth notes

[129] The times in this chart are based on the recording of "Lumumba" on the Album "The Freedom Songs of the Somali Republic," Smithsonian Folkways Recordings/Folkways Records.

throughout the measure with accents on the important beats of this rhythm, which parallel the melodic line (Example 3.3).

Example 3.2. Basic rhythmic pattern of "Lumumba."

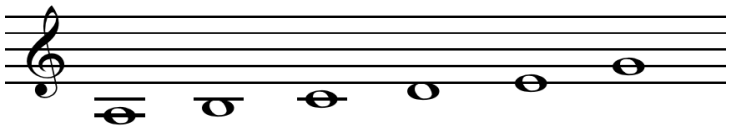
Example 3.3. Variation on "Lumumba" rhythmic pattern in oud accompaniment.



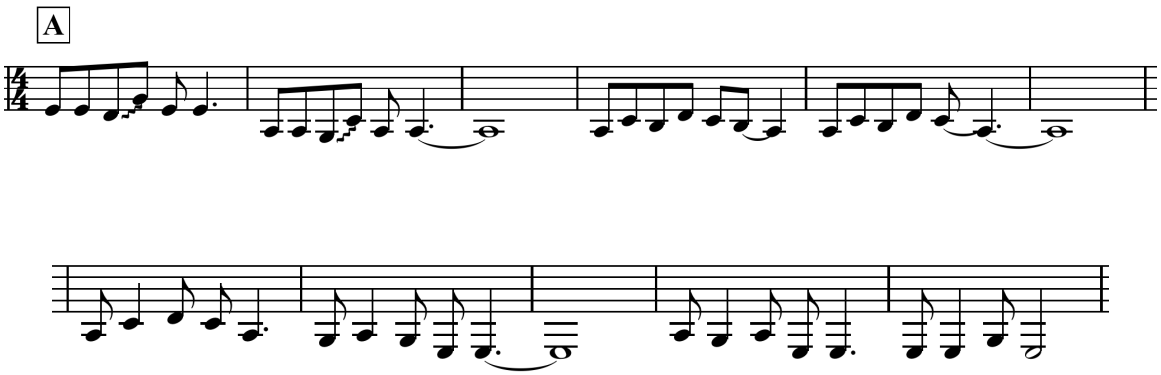
Each textual phrase is 3 bars in length, ending with a long sustained note often characterized by an open vibrato or oscillation around the pitch. A transcription of the melody of the Refrain (A) is shown below in Example 5. This transcription is a guideline, as the vocalists vary the pitch on every note. Melismas, or slides between notes, appear between the 3rd and 4th eighth notes. Such placement on an interval, here a 4th, is typical in *heello-hees*. The melisma is marked with a glissando in the Example 3.5. No pitch is ever pure, but the long sustained notes at the end of phrases and sub-phrases have particularly noticeable vibrato. In western terms, the scale source is primarily A Aeolian mode, without the 6th scale step (see Example 3.4). The modal sound draws on the traditional Arabic modal system discussed above. It can be specifically linked to the Rast, an Arabic mode commonly used in Quranic recitation.[130] In "Lumumba" the melody always returns to scale note 5 or 1, two anchor pitches that act as a home or reciting tone.

[130] Faruqi, "The Cantillation of the Qu'ran," 9.

Example 3.4. Pitch Source of "Lumumba." A Aeolian mode without the 6th scale step.



Example 3.5. Male melody in "Lumumba" Refrain (A).



Flexible in intonation, oscillating around the exact pitch, and sweet in nature, the quality of Qarshe's voice successfully achieves the aesthetic desires of *heello-hees*. Qarshe employs many melismas and vibrato, while still sounding effortless, which is important to Somali listeners. The voice should be supported, not overshadowed, by the instruments.

The development of *heello-hees* from a traditional poetic form to a political weapon in song, closely parallels the evolution of Abdullahi Qarshe's life and career. Qarshe's "Lumumba" represents *heello-hees* style through its use of text, instrumentation, structure, rhythm, vocal technique, and melody. Somali poetic forms, Arabic instruments, traditional vocal techniques, and political sentiments of the time are

layered together to create a musical expression that is both connected to Somali heritage and relevant to Qarshe's individual experiences and context. Just as religious and popular Arabic musical forms create a single "category divided and sub-divided into numerous contrasting sub-styles,"[131] Somali music is divided into many subdivisions, including *gabay, hees, cayaar,* and *heello-hees*. The development of the diaspora results in more subdivision and a an even greater variety of musical styles. As will be shown in Chapter IV, these new styles remain connected to their Somali heritage, but provide a different expression of Somaliness through the blending of multiple musical languages. All forms equally represent a Somali musical aesthetic or identity.

Though the geographic context has changed, the issues of identity, nationalism, and new technologies and instruments dealt with by Qarshe's generation of artists have not disappeared. It remains to be seen which artists of the current generation will best deal with the modern context of Somalis around the world. The productive period of creation led by Qarshe's generation ended because "the creeping chaos of national putrefaction engulfed everyone…Survival and, later, decampment became *the* priorities."[132] Cultural production was put aside for survival and Somalis entered the 'valley.' Maryan Ali, like Samatar, believes that "if the current long and violent darkness is not to become a permanent condition, then a resurgence of the artistic virtues of rich intuition and bold imagination must rise again."[133] The following chapter investigates the musical terrain of the Somali diaspora and how new artistic virtues, intuition, and imagination, have risen in the current context.

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[131] Faruqi, "The Status of Music in Muslim Nations: Evidence from the Arab World," 74.
[132] Samatar, "Battling on Two Fronts: Introducing Maryan Omar Ali," 34.
[133] Ibid., 36.

CHAPTER IV:
NEW WAYS OF EXPRESSING SOMALI IDENTITY THROUGH MUSIC IN THE DIASPORA

This chapter draws on both ethnographic research and musical analysis to portray new Somali music in the diaspora. Opinions gathered in my interviews with Somalis in Minneapolis and Atlanta demonstrate how people understand their new music, how they compare it to traditional *heello-hees*, and how they use their music to express their Somali identity. Close readings of the songs "Hoobaale" by K'Naan Warsame and "Masaafo" by Ahmed Yare provide examples of two different styles of new music in the diaspora. From these close readings it becomes evident that particular musical qualities and characteristics have both been retained and changed in the new musical forms. It also becomes apparent that there is no one way to define what it means to be Somali in the diaspora, or in general. Rather, identity depends on the experiences of the individual within the specific community.

Public Opinion of New Music

Through my interviews I found that many Somalis believe something drastic has changed in Somali cultural production. Many who held traditional or 'original' *heello-hees* in high regard see a bleak cultural landscape, both at home in Somalia and in the diaspora. Since the overall volume of production of music has decreased, especially in unstable areas like Mogadishu, many Somalis believe that poetry and song, two of Somalia's greatest gifts, have all but disappeared. They greatly fear that artists in the

diaspora now lack the passion, capacity, or capability of their forefathers and the *heello-hees* musicians to produce good songs. This perceived "valley"[134] of Somali cultural production is in part a reaction to the political and cultural fallout after the Civil War. The Somali Republic in which Qarshe's career, like many others, flourished no longer exists. Musicians now face a new context that will give rise to new musical forms and meanings, different from those of the *heello-hees* composers.

While in Minneapolis I spoke with Professor Ahmed Ismail Samatar, a prominent Somali academic and leader. Samatar is a Professor of International Studies at Macalester College and also the Dean of the Institute for Global Citizenship. A leader in both his native country and the diaspora, he ran for President of Somalia in 2012. He represents a group that I will call "traditionalists," that is, Somalis involved in cultural preservation and doubtful of contemporary music's importance. According to Professor Samatar, the merging of the cultures (that of Somalia and of the diaspora in America) is impossible unless both are truly known and understood. Since the younger generation has spent their formative years in the diaspora among different combinations of people and within different cultures, it is impossible for them to have the same understanding of Somalia and Somaliness as those who remain or spent the majority of their life in Somalia. At the same time they cannot be American in the same way as someone born to an American family and raised in an American neighborhood. Is it not possible, though, for them to combine aspects or idioms from both cultures and create an entirely new identity? My examples show how contemporary musicians express hybrid identities as they blend popular styles such as Rap and Reggae; compositional methods; rhythmic and melodic patterns; traditional instruments; electronic technology; traditional vocal performance

[134] Samatar, interview.

practice; English and Somali languages; and emphasis on poetry. While not appreciated by all members of the community, this aesthetic nonetheless represents a growing and important subsection of the community, that is, the youth in the diaspora.

Samatar strongly opposes the new music of the diaspora. He refers to the general state of the music industry and cultural production as a "valley," due to a lack of government investment within Somalia, political and economic insecurity due to civil war, and Islamic fundamentalism, that has stigmatized the art form as sacrilegious or blasphemous. Samatar believes that the artistry that once thrived in the midst of an emerging nation has disappeared. He views new creations as "junk," produced by artists that lack any poetic ability or musical talent and is unsure if the culture can recover.

The open distaste of many I spoke with about the new music emphasizes the tension between generations and demonstrates how starkly musical tastes can contrast between different sections of the diaspora. In interviews with Somalis involved with local radio stations and commentators on Somali culture, I found that individuals choose sides or a group to identify with. Crossover between groups who are against new music and those who enjoy and support it is rare. Individuals with different identities may simply not understand each other. Members of the older generation believe that their children do not understand the hidden messages of traditional *heello-heeso*. Perhaps the older generation does not understand the issues that young Somali musicians are addressing. The new music of the diaspora is referencing a situation unknown to the older generation, one that they cannot understand, having not grown up in the Somali-American context.

In contrast to the pessimistic opinions of contemporary Somali music production in the diaspora, many of the small business owners with whom I spoke believed that the

Somali stories and themes remain the same, with only various musical characteristics changing. While some critics think that all new Somali music sounds the same, the forms vary stylistically across musicians. The examples discussed in detail below, "Hoobaale" and "Masaafo," represent two contrasting musical languages present in the diaspora.

Musical Analysis

Characteristics of Music in the Diaspora: Innovation and Retention

Exposure to musical genres such as Reggae pop, hip-hop, and rap, has strongly influenced contemporary Somali music in the diaspora. Young generations like to listen to Somali rap, and new musicians like to draw on rap's style rather than be constrained by their traditional musical heritage. Somali rap differs from the American variety, incorporating standard beats with Somali dance rhythms. K'Naan says that Somali rap has more credibility than American rap, because the authors have lived the experience in their native country.[135] Remixes of traditional *heello-hees* with such pop idioms constitute the "junk" Samatar describes. Most of the new Somali music is faster than traditional songs. Some artists incorporate a Reggae beat, such as Ahmed Yare in his song "Masaafo" discussed below. Artists want to be Somali, but also to break out of the box of traditional Somali music in the new context of the diaspora. One way to create this identity is to use a combination of English and Somali languages. For example, rap artists like Marwo and Kay[136] use Somanglish[137] to express their message more effectively to their young Somali-American audience. Kay's "Drought" (2011), uses a Refrain in

[135] "Somali Rapper K'Naan Schools American MCs," narrated by Elizabeth Blair, Morning Edition, *NPR*, January 06, 2009, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=98957087.
[136] Kay is a young Somali rapper from Minneapolis
[137] Somali-English hybrid language

Somali that says "hunger and hardship / trouble and war / God Help Us."[138] The rap verses in English expand on this sentiment, describing the famine in Somalia and the need for international action. Youth in the Somali diaspora listen to Kay, discussing his music on YouTube in English. They may be better able to identify with an artist who shares their multicultural experience. Music in Somali culture has always provided a forum to discuss political problems and social hardship. Though the specific issues and people participating in the conversation have changed over time, music continues to function in this way.

Technological and practical changes in production have redefined the Somali music industry in the diaspora. Electronic synthesizers, keyboards, and mixers are now the primary tools for making new music or revamping older songs. The electronic systems allow for a stronger bass in the music as well, so appeal more to young audiences accustomed to electronic rap. "Traditionalists" with whom I spoke do not approve of technological innovations. Rather they believe that synthesizers dilute or degrade the music and do away with the necessity of musical skill and training. Samatar, for example, emphasized the virtuosity of *heello-hees* composers, comparing them to untrained musicians in the contemporary diaspora. Many musicians now make recordings at home on a synthesizer, without a producer. This sparks a fear in the "traditionalists" that music may become a cheap and inauthentic imitation of traditional forms, produced and disseminated without regulation by radio or professional leaders. Many young musicians who make their own recordings at home and post them on the internet[139] remix popular traditional songs. Recordings of *heello-hees* artists such as Qarshe are available on sites

[138] "'The Drought' Saving Dadaab KAY (www.kaymusic.com)," YouTube video, 4:35, posted by "clickkay," September 21, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rsx6a0t53gs.
[139] www.youtube.com, www.reverbnation.com, and www.somalioz.com.

like YouTube. The Somali language and symbolic poetry pose a challenge for young musicians learning these songs orally, since they may be unable to hear clearly or understand exactly what is being said. They may then mispronounce or change words, thus altering the meaning of the poetry.

Performance practices have changed in the diaspora due to a lack of funding, instrumental training and resources, venues, and transportation. Some musicians learn traditional instruments such as the oud and form bands, but this is not the norm. In America, singers perform alone more often than with bands, using pre-recorded tracks as accompaniment. Solo performances with background tracks are not always as enjoyable for the audience, unless there is an activity such as dancing. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to attend a Somali wedding in Atlanta, where a young musician from Minneapolis, Ahmed Yare, had been hired to perform. Yare used a combination of both traditional and new songs, all of which had prerecorded accompaniment tracks. In order to perform he needed only a microphone, sound system, and his computer. Guests did not simply listen to the music, but danced enthusiastically in large circles, taking turns in the center. The electronic and solo nature of wedding performances allowed Yare to take breaks from performing, while guests continued to dance to recorded instrumental music.

"Traditionalists" are concerned that the poetic skill of the Somali people has been destroyed in the diaspora. They fear entertainment value has overshadowed storytelling and they believe the new music has no connection to Somali culture and *heello-hees*. Poetry has always been the most important part of *hello-hees*, with musical accompaniment meant to play a supporting role. In contrast, contemporary music often overpowers the singer. Nonetheless, contemporary figures, such as K'Naan and Kay,

write music with a message in mind. They identify with the traditional value of Somali music to include themes such as peace and reconciliation while incorporating new musical idioms. I assert that this is a new, but equally important, expression of Somali ideas compared to the traditional *heello-hees*.

While critics complain that music in the diaspora is disconnected from Somali cultural heritage and value, the new music retains important aspects of oral tradition, song structure, and textual emphasis. I argue that the valued tradition of oral learning has been retained in the diaspora. The music has yet to be written down, and musicians continue to learn through exposure and emulation, watching videos and listening to recordings. While these oral traditions are more technological and geographically dispersed than before, they still constitute oral transmission of music.

There are also continuities in the structure of the music and poetry. New music follows the same form as *heello-hees*, where verses alternate with a repeated refrain. Because of this technique, the length of the pieces is still quite long. In *heello-hees* the verses build on the *belwo* poetry tradition. It is here that the meaning or story progresses. Many musicians who write in a combination of Somali and English write the refrains in Somali and the verses in English, in a similar *belwo*-refrain pattern. This can be seen in the close reading of "Hoobaale" later in this Chapter.

Composers continue to base their songs on lyrics. They emphasize the message and meaning of the words and the overall desire to include a story is ever present. The times have changed, and so the poetic subject matter has been altered accordingly. Today

the political songs revolve around "peace and reconciliation."[140] Musical accompaniment continues to be composed after the poems have been written, but traditional writing techniques, such as uniform alliteration, have been pushed aside because of their difficulty. This is logically due to artists who use the English language, as this technique is more effectively and easily achieved in Somali.

The Contemporary Somali Music Industry

A lack of copyright law is one of the biggest issues that the musicians in the diaspora face today. *Heello-hees* musicians of the twentieth century received compensation directly from the radio stations but did not hold copyright over their songs. Now, with the internet as a primary means of transmitting new music, producers and musicians often do not receive any compensation. Those involved in the industry, including those making an unfair profit, wish this were different. I heard mention of an attempt in Djibouti to register all musicians in hopes of enforcing copyright rules.

In the diaspora, studios act as the hub of the Somali music industry. They are primarily stores selling CDs and videos, but may also include small recording rooms with synthesizers. I spoke with the distributors of new Somali music at three studios in the Minneapolis community.[141] The owners described how the industry works in terms of production and transmission. Although "traditionalists" implied there is no completely original music coming out of the diaspora, the studio owners informed me that in the last year approximately 250 original songs were posted online. Most contemporary musicians

[140] Chantal Logan, "The Enduring Power of Somali 'Oral Political Poetry': Songs and Poems of Peace in the Midst of Chaos," in *Songs and Politics in Eastern Africa*, ed. Kimani Njobu and Hervé Maupeu (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd, 2007), 355.
[141] Sahan Studio, Somali Total Music, and California Studio, interview by Erica Jordan, Minneapolis, MN, January 4, 2013.

record at home and post their videos on YouTube. In this way, Somalis in the diaspora are watching and listening to not only local music, but also new music from Somalis throughout the world.

Figure 4.1. Sahan Studio, Karmel Mall,

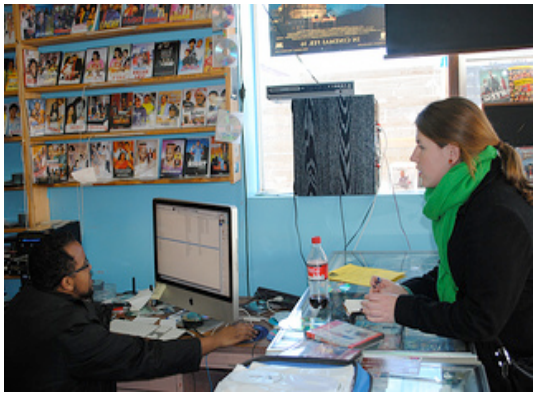

Figure 4.2. Somali Total Music, Karmel Mall, Minneapolis, MN. 1/4/13

Studio owners monitor Somali artists posting new videos on YouTube and when a song becomes popular enough, they download the video. After collecting a number of songs, they extract the audio, and burn them to CDs, which are sold for approximately $5 to local community members. CDs are either solo albums or compilations of various artists. One owner told me that he sells more traditional music than contemporary music, but he downloads popular YouTube videos because people will buy anything from an artist they know or like. Studio owners use their iTunes libraries as the foundation of their business (see photos above in Figures 4.1-4.2).[142] In short, the studio owner reaps the

[142] Photographs by Author, 01/04/13.

profits, rather than the producers or musicians. One studio owner stated explicitly that he wished the industry could change, as he felt guilty about the process.

The studio owners pictured above know a great deal about new and old Somali music, and they are very passionate about the art from. They are more critical of new music in general and only select the most talented new artists to represent Somali music in the diaspora. Two of them spent extended time with me, excited about my endeavor to learn about Somali music. The third owner, who runs the largest studio in North America, was not as keen on discussing his business.

New artists in the diaspora struggle to make a living from their music. Traditional *heello-hees* musicians like Abdullahi Qarshe functioned within a professional industry that allowed them to focus on their craft. New artists in the diaspora do not have this luxury and most hold down day jobs. K'Naan and Yare, discussed below, are among the few Somali musicians in America who earn their livings as artists. K'Naan produces albums in the larger American industry while Yare makes money primarily from weddings. Weddings are a typical income source for local musicians, who earn between $500-$2000 per gig. To please the multi-generational audiences at weddings, musicians play a mixture of new and old music. But even the older music has been revamped using a synthesizer in the musician's style. At Yare's wedding performance in Atlanta he mixed old and new music in an attempt to accommodate various musical tastes. Every song, however, had an electronic sound due the synthesized track. Traditional instruments, such as the oud, in the older songs were replaced by tracks, such as synthesized guitar. Guests danced to all of the music, despite its age or genre.

K'Naan Warsame

K'Naan Warsame represents an influential voice from the diaspora. A Somali-Canadian poet, rapper, singer, songwriter, and instrumentalist based in New York City, he is considered a hip-hop/rap artist in the American music industry and produces music that some traditionalists do not consider connected to *heello-hees*. Samatar said that K'Naan is a good man, but he is not making Somali music. Perhaps the most internationally known Somali musician,[143] both members of the diaspora and Americans know his work, though he is not followed in Somalia. This both separates him further from traditional Somali forms and distinguishes his music as a new and unique representation of Somali identity in the diaspora. K'Naan has been very successful in America, collaborating with many Top 40 artists,[144] gaining recognition, and winning many awards.[145] Regardless of how others may define him or his work, K'Naan strongly identifies as a Somali artist and poet.

K'Naan has a deep understanding and respect for the Somali art of story telling through oral poetry. His grandfather was a renowned poet in Somalia who taught him the skills of *heello-hees.*[146] In his recent article for the New York Times,[147] K'Naan outlined his struggles in the American hip-hop/rap industry and his desire to return to a more traditional Somali poetic practice. He writes about how he "forgot his own"[148] identity in

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[143] Millions of people throughout the world have heard his song, "Wavin' Flag," which was chosen as the promotional anthem for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.
[144] Mary J. Blige, Jason Mraz, Lenny Kravitz, Simple Plan, Nas, Bono, etc.
[145] 2006 Juno Awards: Rap Recording of the Year, 2010 Juno Awards: Artist of the Year, Songwriter of the Year, 2010 Mobo Awards: African Artist of the Year, 2011 Juno Awards: Single of the Year, and 2012 MTV Music Video Awards: Best Video With a Message.
[146] "K'Naan: A Song 'More Beautiful Than Silence,'" narrated by NPR Staff, Morning Edition, *NPR*, March 06, 2012, http://www.npr.org/2012/03/06/147807814/knaan-a-song-more-beautiful-than-silence.
[147] K'Naan, "Censoring Myself for Success," *New York Times*, December 8, 2012, accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/opinion/sunday/knaan-on-censoring-himself-for-success.html.
[148] Ibid.

an attempt to gain success in the industry. His advisors remind him that his songs are not only for himself, but also for an audience. Songs about Somalia do not necessarily attract American audiences, and so K'Naan stifled his message for the sake of success. Instead of singing about the issues close to his heart, his producers wanted him to write lighter songs, more easily accessible to the American audience. K'Naan calls this experience the "affliction of success."[149] He understood that in order to please his new audience he needed to "quiet the pain of [his] Somali roots."[150] His subdued lyrics, in which he does not discuss the situations of Somalis, feel like bodies "with no soul at all."[151]

A progression of musical style may be traced through his recordings. His first album, *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* (2005), uses many Somali musical traits such as rhythm, ensemble arrangement, instrumentation, and vocal techniques. These characteristics are exemplified in "Hoobaale," which is analyzed below. His later albums, *Troubadour* (2010) and *Country, God, or the Girl* (2012), employ more hip-hop idioms. K'naan now faces a new challenge: how to retain his Somali identity while remaining successful in his chosen career. He says that, "Somalia is where my life and poetry began. It is my walk. And I don't want to lose it. Or stifle it. Or censor it in the name of marketing."[152] He wants to remember the "power of lyrics—to encapsulate magic, or to spread alarm"[153] and the traditional elements of *heello-hees* he learned of during his childhood. How then, can one say he is not Somali or has not produced Somali songs?

K'Naan's struggles come not with the musical transition and incorporation of hip-hop/rap characteristics, but with the challenge of writing poetry that speaks to both him

[149] K'Naan, "Censoring Myself for Success."
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

and his multicultural audience. His journey now is to rediscover himself as a Somali poet. Through this rediscovery, and keeping with his previous work, K'Naan aims to "raise consciousness about what's happening"[154] in Somalia and perhaps change the way Somalia is viewed. A Somali who works as a community organizer in a refugee camp says that K'Naan "speaks the truth" [155] for all Somalis. This conscious focus on a message and poetic goals connect K'Naan to his Somali musical roots.

Somali music in the diaspora is one of experimentation. K'Naan exemplifies artists who are trying to define themselves in a new context. By drawing from everything he is exposed to, and then deciding what is most meaningful to him, he is able to choose how to express his identity. K'Naan now chooses to reconnect with the skills and values of classic *heello-hees* composers, while remaining in the hip-hop world. K'Naan's commentary on his career reveals the difficulty of creating a new identity that is not accepted by all members of the community. Although his work may not express the identity of the "traditionalists," it is an honest and authentic representation of his position in the diaspora.

Close Reading of "Hoobaale"

"Hoobaale," from K'Naan's album *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* (2005), represents a style of new music in the diaspora that retains Somali musical idioms from *heello-hees*. The title word does not have a specific meaning, but is a word often used to introduce the rhythm of a poem or song. This song in particular was chosen because it directly references traditional Somali musical forms and so clearly represents K'Naan's

[154] *NPR*, "Somali Rapper K'Naan Schools American MCs."
[155] *NPR*, "Somali Rapper K'Naan Schools American MCs."

connection to his musical roots. When put in the larger context of his work, it becomes apparent that K'Naan's connections to traditional Somali music are not always the same. It is more obvious in "Hoobaale" than in many other songs. K'Naan's hybrid musical identity is not fixed. In "Hoobaale" K'Naan emphasizes the message transmitted through the lyrics, an especially important traditional Somali technique where poetry takes the central position. The structure of "Hoobaale" (see Figure 4.3) is like the refrain form of *heello-hees*. The repeated line, 'Hobalay,' is a constant thread throughout the piece, both in terms of text and its musical setting. K'Naan further emulates the *heello-hees* structure by alternating nine two-line verses or *belwos* with this repeated line. *Belwos* 1-4 are sung in English, while *belwos* 5-9 are in Somali.

Figure 4.3. Formal Structure of "Hoobaale."[156]

INTRO	Chorus	Verse 1[1]	V1[2]	V1[3]	V1[4]
Introduction	Refrain	Belwo 1	Belwo 2	Belwo 3	Belwo 4
00:00-00:30	00:30-00:56	00:56-1:16	1:16-1:36	1:36-1:55	1:55-2:15
Instrumental: oud solo, spoken voices, and drum.	Choir	Male solo followed by choir (2x)	Male solo followed by choir (2x)	Male solo followed by choir (2x)	Male solo followed by choir (2x)

Chorus	Verse 2[1]	V2[2]	V2[3]	V2[4]	V2[5]	Chorus	OUTRO
Refrain	Belwo 5	Belwo 6	Belwo 7	Belwo 8	Belwo 9	Refrain	OUTRO
2:15-2:34	2:34-2:44	2:44-2:54	2:54-3:03	3:03-3:13	3:13-3:23	3:23-3:58	3:58-5:05
Choir and hand clapping	Male solo followed by choir	Male solo followed by choir	Male solo followed by choir	Male solo followed by choir	Male solo followed by choir	Choir	Instrumental: oud solo, fade out with drums

[156] Times in this Listening Guide are based on K'Naan's studio album *The Dusty Foot Philosopher*.

The intended strong and politicized message lies in the verses of "Hoobaale." K'Naan expresses his desire to end political and economic struggles before catastrophe strikes or "somebody has fallen." He laments the silence of his country and the international community, and he reiterates the terror of famine and political crisis (i.e. civil war) in the Horn of Africa. This musical call to save Somalia is similar to Qarshe's freedom songs from the 1950s. Just as "*Ka Kacay! Ka Kacay!"* appealed to the Somali people to realize their situation as a colony and react accordingly, "Hoobaale" asks questions, revealing Somalia's unstable situation in 2005. "Traditionalists," however, disregard its connection to Somali tradition because the song is in English, the lyrics are too direct, or it is marketed as a hip-hop album. "Traditionalists" believe that direct lyrics, like K'Naan's, reflect how the younger generation has lost their sense of imagery. Yet, just as traditional *heello-hees* is meant to be "infectious and invading,"[157] "Hoobaale" draws emotion and action out of the listener. In the tradition of great Somali music, "Hoobaale" is powerful enough to overtake the soul and make a difference in society. K'Naan uses a new language, literally and musically, to achieve this goal of Somali music. He aims to raise awareness and bring peace and freedom to Somalia. The lyrics in Example 4.1 demonstrate his message.

Example 4.1. Lyrics of "Hoobaale." *Belwos* 1-4 and Chorus.

Chorus:
Hobalayow heedhe
(11x)

Verse One: 1
How come they only fix the bridge

[157] Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammed 'Abdille Hasan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

after somebody has fallen (male solo)
Hobalayow heedhe
Hobalayow heedhe (choir)
(2x)

V1: 2
How can you turn the deafest ear
when its your own brother calling (male solo)
Hobalayow heedhe
Hobalayow heedhe (choir)
(2x)

V1: 3
How can you teach your kids to love
when it's killing they're memorizing (male solo)
Hobalayow heedhe
Hobalayow heedhe (choir)

(2x)

V1: 4
How can they go to war with terror
when it's war that's terrorizing (male solo)
Hobalayow heedhe
Hobalayow heedhe (choir)
(2x)

The instrumentation in "Hoobaale" is unique for music of the diaspora and most significantly retains Somali and Arabic traditions. Rather than using synthesizers the song incorporates acoustic oud and drum accompaniment. While the studio recording uses the traditional oud, K'Naan exchanges it for a guitar during live performances.[158] This replacement of a traditional instrument with a western instrument demonstrates K'Naan's flexibility to create a hybrid musical identity. His ability to use live instruments rather than just synthesizers probably also reflects his position in the American hip-hop industry, where he has greater financial resources. He has the means to perform with other instrumentalists rather than just a pre-recorded track. In contrast to synthesized

[158] "K'naan – Hoobaale (Lisbon & Estoril Film Festival, Nimas, 07/11/2011)," YouTube video, 4:27, posted by "festmag," November 8, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkCkTFmneEo.

music of the diaspora, “Hoobaale” uses only these two accompaniment instruments, the oud and drums. Synthesized music, as we will see in “Masaafo” later, takes advantage of the ability to produce any sound, thus creating more varied musical accompaniment.

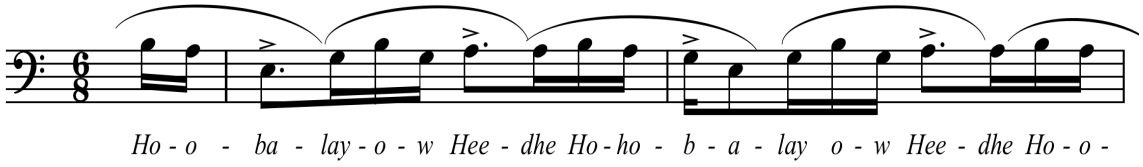
The rhythm of “Hoobaale” is not played exactly straight, but rather with a swing, leading to the strong beats 1 and 4 in a compound duple 6/8 meter (see Example 4.2). The slurs in the diagram below show the groupings that dictate the direction of the swing. The turn figure above the downbeat in the second measure represents the oud’s elaboration on sustained notes, an embellishment essential to oud music in traditional *heello-hees.* The tempo is slower than many songs from the diaspora, again strengthening its connection to *heello-hees*, and how K’Naan intentionally uses traditional Somali idioms in order to assert his connection to the nation and the political issues he is addressing.

Example 4.2. Basic Rhythmic Pattern, in Accompaniment and Voice after Introduction

The vocals in “Hoobaale” repeat the line “Hobalayow Heedhe” in a linear, chant-like pattern that travels back and forth over an interval of a perfect 4th (E to A) (see Example 4.3), reminiscent of the reciting tones found in early *heello-hees*, like “Lumumba.” “Hoobaale” sounds modal to western ears. Here the pitch source is an E minor pentatonic scale (see Example 4.4). K’Naan’s hybrid style employs both traditional

vocal techniques and rap or spoken word idioms. While the vocal quality of the chant is somewhat nasal, the English lines that contain the message of the song are rapped.

Example 4.3. " Hoobaale" Refrain Melody.



Etc…

Example 4.4. Pitch source of "Hoobaale." Scale tones 1, 3, 4, and 5 from minor pentatonic scale.

"Hoobaale" is an example of K'Naan's clear reference to his Somali heritage. Though some of his other music is more separated from traditional *heello-hees*, it is clear in "Hoobaale" that K'Naan employs traditional musical idioms to express his Somali identity. He also emphasizes a political issue through lyrics, similar to the intended function of *heello-hees*. K'Naan uses structure, lyrics, instrumentation, and repeated chant like vocals to mark the song as Somali. He combines these characteristics with the English language and rapped verses to create his own version of Somali music. When performed live, traditional instruments are replaced with more accessible western instruments. This combination acts as a hybrid musical language, reflective of K'Naan's hybrid identity.

Ahmed Yare

Ahmed Yare is a young Somali-American star from Minneapolis. While he serves as an excellent example of how local musicians work directly within the community, his role as a professional musician involves travel throughout the United States and occasionally to Hargeisa, Somalia. Families often hire popular musicians from the larger diaspora community, and fly them in to perform at local events. I met Yare when he performed at a wedding in Atlanta on August 25, 2012. At such celebrations like weddings and national holidays Yare likes to perform a mixture of new and old songs in order to appeal to the multi-generational audience. He revamps the older songs he performs and transforms them into electronic tracks.

Like K'Naan, Yare combines musical idioms to create a hybrid genre, yet he draws on different musical characteristics, both traditional and contemporary. In particular, he combines Reggae rhythms and synthesized music with Somali lyrics. Yare's decision to sing only in Somali reflects a more traditional style than K'Naan as well as his different, and more specifically Somali, audience. Unlike K'Naan, Yare lives, works, and performs predominantly with Somalis, rather than a mixture of Somalis and Americans. Non-Somalis have probably never heard his music. Yet, like K'Naan, as a professional musician Yare is unique in the diaspora. Most contemporary musicians post homemade recordings on YouTube, while few work with producers or studios to create a track like Yare. The example of his work, "Masaafo" or "Distance," analyzed below, was directed by Studio Liibaan and was the product of a collaboration of multiple Somali artists. Yare's collaborative practice is reflective of *heello-hees* production techniques.

One of Yare's songwriters, with whom I spoke in Minneapolis, described how some of Yare's new music continues the tradition of uniform alliteration. This songwriter's more traditional style, or "cultural" music as he refers to it, represents his heritage and connection to the Somali community. While "Masaafo" does not demonstrate this traditional technique, Yare's collaboration with composers who continue to work in traditional methods reveal his desire to perform "cultural" music as well, and thus remain connected to his Somali roots despite his contemporary hybrid musical language.

Close Reading of "Mosaafo"

"Masaafo" or "Distance" represents not only Yare's musical style, but also the music video style of local Somali musicians.[159] The video presents the names of all involved in the production and shows Yare performing the song in various settings, sometimes public and sometimes private. Rather than reflect a plot, the video shows various images of him singing in both black and white and color, beginning and ending with credits. These acknowledgements show how many people from the community were involved in the production. "Masaafo" is truly a collaborative effort. The emotion of his lyrics, that is the pain of losing love, is apparent in the performance, despite the absence of an explicit plot. Because the musical accompaniment is electronic, there are no instrumentalists shown in the video.

With a duration of just over six minutes, "Masaafo" is more in the *heello-hees* tradition than American pop music, completing each cycle before it repeats, begins the

[159] "Ahmed Yare 2013 Masaafo Official Video Directed by (Studio Liibaan)," YouTube video, 7:02, posted by "Liibaan Jama," Dec 11, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6ZG79JhJ7Q.

next section, or the voice enters. The Listening Guide in Figure 8 shows the basic structure of the song. Like in *heello-hees,* there is a Refrain (B) that is repeated twice throughout the song. The verses (A^1 and A^2), however, are longer than the typical 2-line *belwo* form. Figure 4.4 below shows how strictly Yare adheres to his established structure and how the length of every section is exactly the same in every repetition.

Figure 4.4. Formal Structure of "Masaafo."[160]

INTRO	Verse 1 (A^1)		Chorus (B)				
	a	b	a	a	b	a	b
Introduction	Verse One		Refrain				
0:00-0:42	0:42-1:29 (2x)	1:29-2:08 (2x)	2:08-2:18	2:18-2:27	2:27-2:42	2:42-2:52	2:52-3:00
				(2x)			
Synthesized Instrumental	Male Solo + Accompaniment		Male Solo + Accompaniment				

Interlude	Verse 2 (A^2)		Chorus (B)					OUTRO
	a	b	a	a	b	a	b	
Interlude (Same as Introduction)	Verse Two		Refrain					Outro (Same as Introduction)
3:00-3:42	3:42-4:29 (2x)	4:29-5:08 (2x)	5:08-5:18	5:18-5:27	5:27-5:42	5:42-5:52	5:52-6:00	6:00-6:11
				(2x)				
Synthesized Instrumental	Male Solo + Accompaniment		Male Solo + Accompaniment					Accompaniment and Vocal repetition of last line, fading out.

In the beginning of the video, after introducing the Studio Liibaan and Ahmed Yare, the text "True Love Song" appears. Somalis understand love, and often the pain

[160] Times in this Listening Guide are based on "Ahmed Yare 2013 Masaafo Official Video Directed by (Studio Liibaan)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6ZG79JhJ7Q.

associated with love, to be an important and recurring theme in *heello-hees*, as well as contemporary music. This theme and the emotions of the lyrics connect "Masaafo" with the texts and metaphors of *heello-hees*. "Masaafo" describes the painful feelings of absence or emptiness, and the struggles of dealing with a lost love. Yare sings, "Your distance and the absence, the emptiness of bed and home. The imposed anxiety and pain" (see Example 4.5). The pain is central to the meaning of this song and so is repeated 3 times. He asks his love, "what can desires do" if "you are not coming?" This is an unrequited or failed love and the pain will never cease.[161]

Example 4.5. "Masaafo" Lyrics with English Translation, A^1 and B.[162]

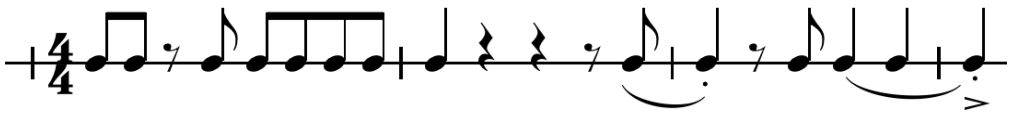
A^1:	A^1:
Masaafada aad jirtiyoo	The distance covered
maqnaantaadiyo fogida	Your distance and the absence
sariirtiyo guriga maran	The emptiness of bed and home
intey murugiyo xanuun	The imposed anxiety and pain
xanuun xanuun	The Pain! The Pain!
ibadeen mayaraa	What happened to me is not easy
(2x)	(2x)
Qalbiga mooralka katagay	The heart that has no morals
xusuusi miyey dhaydaa	Not cured by the remembrance
maaweelo kolaye ku tahay	This is going to be even entertainment for you
maxay lahashadu tartaa	What can desires do?
(2x)	(2x)
B:	B:
Macaan hadii aanad imaaneyn	Honey if you are not coming
jaceylkiyo mohashadeydaa	My love and expectations
Macaan hadii aanad imaaneyn	Honey if you are not coming
jaceylkiyo mohashadeydaa	My love and expectations
Inaan mariyo	lead the way
haltoona haltoona	Even one or two
midnaba loohayn	I have nothing anymore
ogsoonoow	I know it
(2x)	(2x)

[161] A hidden meaning could be interpreted from this text. The lost love can be understood as a metaphor for a lost homeland.

"Masaafo" is composed with all electronic synthesized sounds, adding voice on top of the track. The main instrumental sounds are brass, saxophone, bass, and drums, an ensemble that exemplifies a typical sound in the synthesized music of the diaspora. Yare especially highlights the brass instruments, as they play melodic and rhythmic riffs between vocal verses. Yare is strongly influenced here by reggae rhythms, and is in fact considered to be a reggae artist by some websites. The 4-bar instrumental reggae style rhythmic pattern introduced in section A is repeated throughout the piece. Examples 4.6-4.7 illustrate the basic rhythmic accompaniment pattern and its slight variation. Yare's use of new sounds and rhythmic patterns (synthesized instruments and Reggae rhythms) in combination with the meaningful lyrics discussed above, signify a hybrid musical expression. Similar to K'Naan's rap, Yare draws on aspects of both his current environment and his traditional Somali heritage.

Example 4.6. Basic rhythmic accompaniment pattern of "Masaafo."

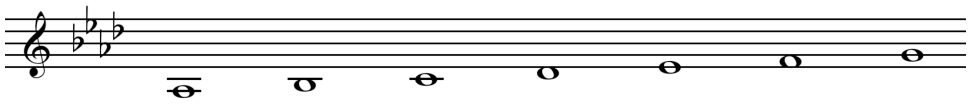
Example 4.7. Variation on rhythmic accompaniment pattern in "Masaafo."



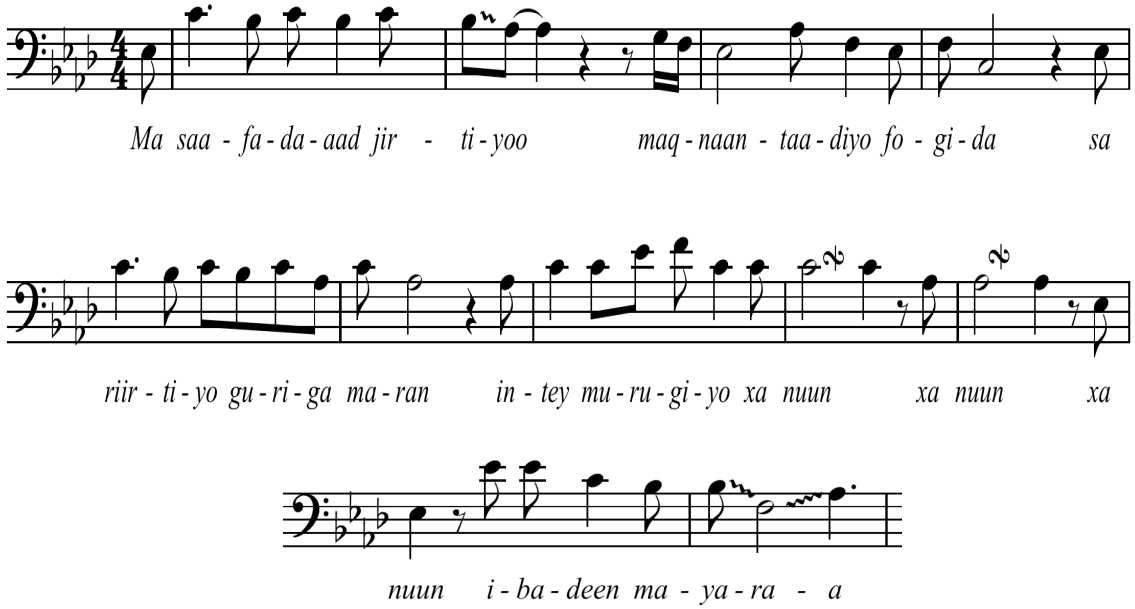
[162] Translated by Hussien Mohamed.

Yare's vocal style also reflects a new Somali identity building on the established tradition. He sings solo in "Masaafo," rather than incorporating a chorus during the Refrain as in "Lumumba" and "Hoobaale." The melody of "Masaafo" shares many characteristics with pop style music, such as syncopated rhythms and a major pitch source rather than the pentatonic scale or reciting tones. The vocal melody draws from the A-flat major scale (see Example 4.8) and is harmonized with typical functional chords in pop music, such as I, vi, and V. The melody of section A-a is shown below in Example 4.9. A Somali vocal characteristic maintained in this song is the melisma (marked with a glissando in the last measure). The turns marked in the 8th and 9th measure indicate an embellishment. Just as *heello-hees* singers vibrato to vary the pitch, Yare uses this embellishment to encircle the pitch. The vocal part includes jumps over intervals, similar again to the vocal techniques of *heello-hees*. Yare's vocals combine new performance practices, Pop style melodic rhythmic patterns, major keys, and functional harmonies with traditional techniques such as melisma. This combination signifies the creation of a hybrid musical language, and reflects the hybrid identity that he constructs within his multicultural environment.

Example 4.8. Pitch source of "Masaafo," A-flat Major.



Example 4.9. Melody of "Masaafo," Section A-a.



This close reading of "Masaafo" demonstrates how Yare draws on various musical idioms. Yare builds on the Refrain pattern of *heello-hees*, following a strict structure with alternating verses and refrains. The verses are longer here than in traditional *heello-hees*, but the song maintains a cyclical nature. As the focus of "Masaafo," the lyrics also reference *heello-hees* tradition. The text refers to the pain and emptiness of a lost love. Traditional themes often deal with heavy emotions presented in a love song. The instrumentation clearly demonstrates Yare's identity as a contemporary musician in the diaspora. He uses synthesized sounds to create the track, employing new instruments such as brass. Harmonically, "Masaafo" is based on a major scale, rather than traditional pentatonic or modal pitch sources. The major key and syncopated rhythms make the vocals sonically similar to pop music. Yare does however, use embellishment and melismas to reference the traditional pitch fluctuation so important in *heello-hees*.

This combination of idioms is a musical manifestation of Yare's residence in an immigrant community, in which individuals create hybrid identities based on their new context.

Chapter IV traced Somali music into the diaspora and showed how new music is perceived within the communities. The strong opinions of "traditionalists" are compared to the current state of Somali musical production. Interviews with community members, studio owners, and artists reveal that music continues to be a meaningful expression, rather than a dying art form as some "traditionalists" understand it. K'Naan and Yare, two artists chosen because of their prominence in the communities, artistic production, and roles as professional musicians, exemplify the practice of combining musical languages to create a new form of expression. "Hoobaale" blends traditional instruments, vocal chanting, structure, and pentatonic harmonies with rap and the English language. "Masaafo" builds on traditional structure and Somali poetic lyrics, but uses contemporary synthesized instrumental sounds, major harmonies, and pop vocal techniques. These songs provide two examples of how aspects of traditional *heello-hees* have been changed and preserved in the diaspora. K'Naan and Yare have had different experiences in the diaspora and therefore express their Somaliness in unique ways. Though they differ from traditional definitions of Somali music, they constitute authentic representations of being Somali in America.

CHAPTER V:

CONCLUSION:

MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS OF BLENDED IDENTITIES IN THE DIASPORA

The culture of the Somali diaspora in America is a blended one, especially among members of the young generation, who attend school and thus interact more with their American counterparts. It is impossible for younger Somalis to have the same understanding of their culture and history as their parents, grandparents, or even their own future children. To reconcile this sense of being between two cultures, they create a new identity that reflects their personal experiences. Since music is actively used as a means of expression in Somalia, it can clearly demonstrate how Somali artists combine cultural and musical idioms to create new, hybrid musical forms, which in turn, reflect a new, blended cultural identity. The future direction of contemporary music in the Somali diaspora is still to be determined, as artists continue to form new pathways in an ever-evolving cultural environment.

Music is essential to Somali culture. After describing the cultural and historical context in which the Somali poetic musical forms developed, I described the evolution of popular professional music, *heello-hees*, in the context of the life and work of Abdullahi Qarshe. I then traced the music to the diaspora, through close readings of the contemporary works “Hoobaale” by K’Naan and “Masaafo” by Yare. The musical analysis of text, form, melody, rhythm, instrumentation, and vocal practices in this thesis revealed how popular music in the diaspora compares to traditional *heello-hees*. My fieldwork within the communities in Atlanta and Minneapolis revealed how Somalis

understand and interact with traditional and contemporary musical forms and thus with traditional and contemporary cultural identities. My conclusion of this research is that whether or not the new music of the diaspora is respected by older generations, it is a valid form of expression that represents legitimate Somali conditions in the diaspora. Though specific conditions have changed, songs still function to reflect the challenges that Somalis face. These expressions, I argue, both change and retain musical characteristics of traditional *heello-hees*. Both forms show Somali identity or Somaliness, since they developed in similar ways, as youth expressions during times of cultural and political change facilitated by new technologies.

Chapter IV investigates two styles of new Somali music in the diaspora. K'Naan's use of rap and English and Yare's use of Reggae and synthesized sounds exemplify the formation of a new identity or blending of multiple identities, represented through music. Both artists express their Somali identity in an American context, but is one more Somali than the other? I argue that they have taken different paths within a new and varied environment. Both paths, I believe, are equally valid, as expressions of two different experiences that can be had living in the diaspora. Though influenced by different musical forms, both remain connected to their Somali identity, albeit through the use of different Somali musical idioms and blended with different popular styles.

The contrasting positions occupied by K'Naan and Yare within the Somali diaspora could have implications for their freedom to change their musical style and stray away from their Somali roots. Yare perhaps has more freedom because he works for a primarily Somali audience and his Somali identity is therefore unquestioned. His music has many Pop elements, but will always be understood as Somali music because of his

membership in the community. K'Naan on the other hand, functions in a world between the diaspora and the mainstream American music industry. He must appeal to a broader audience while still representing his Somaliness. K'Naan's producers advise him to create particular songs and have at times stifled his Somali connections. An evolution toward more Americanized rap can be seen in K'Naan's first three albums between 2005-2012. K'Naan is represented internationally as a Somali, raising consciousness of the issues within the country, but his Somaliness is questioned by people like Samatar. Despite clear Somali characteristics in songs like "Hoobaale," K'Naan must work to assert his Somaliness against critics like Samatar. K'Naan says himself that he "wants to go back to his Somali traditions but is constrained to fit into the hip-hop world."[163] If he claims a new form of Somali identity and retains idioms of Somali musical traditions, can his Somaliness be denied? K'Naan's experience and feeling of being torn between two worlds is typical in the diaspora.

The most striking discovery to come out of my fieldwork was the contrasting public opinions of new music. This is most clearly seen across generational divides, though generation was not an absolute determining factor. Some younger Somalis, especially those involved in community leadership and cultural preservation, listen primarily to traditional *heello-hees*. They understand new music as a source of entertainment but not as a valuable cultural production. There is a great fear of the future of the music and a desire for improved cultural production among the "traditionalists," but the music that they hope for may not be a possible or even desirable creation in the diaspora. As was discussed in Chapter IV, contemporary musicians create new forms by blending popular styles such as Rap and Reggae; compositional methods; rhythmic and

[163] K'Naan, "Censoring Myself for Success."

melodic patterns; traditional instruments; electronic technology; traditional vocal performance practice; English and Somali languages; and an emphasis on poetry. This reflects the blended nature of their environment.

I argue both traditional and contemporary expressions are important if one is to understand the overall condition of Somalis in America. Although "traditionalists" may not approve, retentions of Somali musical traits can be found in contemporary music, connecting it to the traditions of *heello-hees*. Thus, neither K'Naan nor Yare can be said to be anything other than a Somali musician. I do not intend to imply that any member of the diaspora has a false understanding of their culture, just that the critics have opinions that may not coordinate with other members of the community. Perhaps if new music is understood as an attempt to express oneself in a complex situation, the tensions between generations and criticism of new musicians will lessen. I would also hope that cultural interaction and exposure to Somali cultural production alters the international view of the nation and its people.

I originally hypothesized new musical forms and identities in the diaspora would be determined by geography and age. The physical separation between the diasporic communities and Somalia would lead to natural changes in the music, influenced by the musical languages of the new surroundings. Because the younger generation comes of age in the new Somali-American context, it would follow that they would identify with hybrid musical forms that combine aspects of their Somali heritage and their American surroundings. In contrast to my initial ideas, however, locations throughout the diaspora shared musical characteristics. Generational identity has greater implications for musical taste than geographic location within the diaspora.

Combining scholarship on traditional Somali poetic music, interviews with members of the Somali diaspora, and detailed musical analysis, this thesis traces the development of Somali music over time and space. The traditional form, *heello-hees*, is revealed to be a youth movement, expressive of unique political contexts and strong Somali nationalist identity. Similarly, contemporary music in the diaspora is created by the younger generation and reflects their hybrid Somali-American context and identity. Analysis of text, structure, instrumentation, rhythm, melody, and vocal techniques demonstrates that musical characteristics have been changed and retained, creating a blended musical language. For example, "Hoobaale" combines traditional instrumentation with English rap vocals. "Masaafo" combines synthesized instrumentation and pop melodies with the traditional melismas and the Somali language. Identification with a particular generation's musical taste (i.e. traditional or modern) is not purely based on age. Individuals from the older generation do consume contemporary music. Likewise, some individuals from the younger generation agree with "traditionalists," and view new music as lacking in value. Regardless of individual opinion, all musical production is an expression of the artist.

Cultural identity and its artistic manifestations are not fixed, but constantly evolving. This thesis provides only a brief snapshot in time of how music, and therefore Somali culture, is both changed and preserved in Somali-American communities. It would be fascinating to follow the development of music within the diaspora for a more extended period of time. I hope that this study will lay the groundwork for further exploration of music in the Somali diaspora. The analytical and comparative approach to contemporary Somali music used in this thesis would also be applicable in other

multicultural settings to examine the divide between dichotomies such as young-old, new-traditional, and international-local. While the research in this thesis sheds light on the Somali diaspora in particular, this study could potentially be compared with others to examine how different contexts or environments affect the movement of people and the culture of music.

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APPENDIX A:
GLOSSARY OF SOMALI TERMS

Abwaan - Composer

Balaayo - Evil

Belwo – Short poem, usually 2 lines

Biibiile – Flute

Cayaar – Dance Song/Poem

Daf – Tambourine

Gabay – Poem, serious classical form

Heello - long poem, usually *belwos* strung together

Heello-hees – Professional popular song form, *belwos* and refrain

Hees - Work Song/Poem

Hees - Song

Kaban – Oud

Madrasah – Quaranic school

Ogaden– Region in Eastern Ethiopia

Muruud - Keepers of the shrine

Shareero - Six-stringed lyre

Soomaalinimo - Somaliness

Sugaan - Region in Somaliland

Walaalo Hargeisa - The Hareisa Brothers

APPENDIX B:

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL

EMORY UNIVERSITY | Institutional Review Board

January 4, 2013

Kristin Wendland
Principal Investigator
Music

RE: **Exemption of Human Subjects Research**
IRB00063442
Music of the Somali Diaspora: How Music Changes Through the Process of Immigration

Dear Principal Investigator:

Thank you for submitting an application to the Emory IRB for the above-referenced project. Based on the information you have provided, we have determined on 01/03/2013 that although it is human subjects research, it is exempt from further IRB review and approval.

This determination is good indefinitely unless substantive revisions to the study design (e.g., population or type of data to be obtained) occur which alter our analysis. Please consult the Emory IRB for clarification in case of such a change. Exempt projects do not require continuing renewal applications.

This project meets the criteria for exemption under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Specifically, you will be conducting interviews with members and musicians of Somali-American communities to analyze how the Somali people think about and understand their music. The study will look at how Somali music has changed through the process of immigration and the creation of immigrant communities in America. The following documents were reviewed with this submission:

- Protocol (December 10, 2012)
- Interview Guidelines
- Informed Consent Form (Version Date: 12/14/2012)

Please note that the Belmont Report principles apply to this research: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. You should use the informed consent materials reviewed by the IRB unless a waiver of consent was granted. Similarly, if HIPAA applies to this project, you should use the HIPAA patient authorization and revocation materials reviewed by the IRB unless a waiver was granted. CITI certification is required of all personnel conducting this research.

Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others or violations of the HIPAA Privacy

Rule must be reported promptly to the Emory IRB and the sponsoring agency (if any).

In future correspondence about this matter, please refer to the study ID shown above. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leslie Justice
Research Protocol Analyst
This letter has been digitally signed

CC: Jordan Erica Emory College

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