

**Effect of Knowledge in Music Notation Systems on College Music Majors'  
Transcription of West African Drumming Music**

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**Abstract**

whether he or she advocated Western notation or indigenous notations. Early comparative musicologists and ethnomusicologists were preoccupied with comparing musics of world cultures to Western music (Abraham & Hornbostel, 1994; Hopkins, 1966). Hence, they advocated the use of Western notation because their readership (comprising other Western musicologists) was literate in Western staff notation. Other researchers were more interested in the role that music played within a particular culture, and were concerned that by using Western notation, scholars interested in comparing the musical characteristics of different musical systems would risk erroneously highlighting or neglecting elements of world music traditions (Hood, 1971; Koetting, 1970). Those

abstract metric structure, and (c) a failure to adequately capture the “close interrelation” between vertically-aligned drum ensemble patterns. TUBS was devised to address these issues.

Figure 2 illustrates the principal features of

control group, was an undergraduate music theory class. Students in the class were mostly sophomore and junior undergraduate music majors. Since the theory course was required for all music majors, a broad cross-section of instruments and voices from the

sound-to-symbol and symbol-to-sound. The students initially learned various traditional djembe patterns (e.g.,

Table 2  
*Content Codes for Survey Question #2 Regarding Western Notation Transcriptions*

Code	Group A (First Round)	Group A (Sec. Round)	Group B (First Round)	Group B (Sec. Round)	Group C (First Round)	Group C (Sec. Round)	TOTAL OF ALL GROUPS
W:KNOW	16 (44.44%)	17 (60.71%)	3 (50.00%)	3 (37.50%)	8 (66.67%)	4 (100%)	51
W:PERC	1 (2.78%)	1 (3.57%)	0	0	1 (8.33%)	0	3
W:SEG	7 (19.44%)	2 (7.14%)	0	0	0	0	9
W:VIS	10 (27.78%)	3 (10.71%)	1 (16.67%)	0			

made it too difficult for the students, even those with drumming experience in the second round of transcriptions, to decipher the strokes and tones. It

would be interesting to conduct additional research using video examples and allowing participants more time to complete their transcriptions.

Table 3  
*Frequency of Use of Notational Devices in Western Notation Transcriptions*

	Notational Elements	Traditional Time Signature	Traditional Measures	One Voice Per Staff	Multiple Voices per Staff	Single Staff Line/Space Per Voice	Multiple Staff Lines/Spaces Per Voice	Single staff	Multi-Staff System	Additional Prescriptive Elements
Group A First Round	Staff Paper	13 (36.11%)	23 (63.88%)	24 (66.67%)	6 (16.67%)	19 (52.78%)	10 (27.78%)	25 (69.45%)	4 (11.11%)	9 (25%)
	Blank Paper	3 (8.34%)	5 (13.89%)	7 (19.45%)	-	5 (13.89%)	2 (5.56%)	4 (11.11%)	3 (8.34%)	5 (13.89%)
Group A Second Round	Staff Paper	10 (35.71%)	15 (53.57%)	16 (57.14%)	2					

examples may have been tied to their prior training in Western notation, as it naturally occurs in the context of undergraduate music studies in the United States. This collective attribute of the students in Groups A and B seem to have played a greater role than either Group A's identity as a pan-instrumental music theory class or Group B's identity as a percussion studio class (one might have surmised that drummers would have been better able to pick out individual drum tones, and



