ABSTRACT

This study examines contextual and structural similarities between Ewe music and the music of Steve Reich. It suggests that researching and performing Ewe music leads to a deeper understanding of rhythm and time in Reich’s music, and contributes to accurate, informed performances of his compositions. In broader terms it proposes that practical understanding of the ways in which some non-Western cultures perceive rhythmic structure and temporal organization assists in confronting similar concepts in twentieth and twenty-first century contemporary Western art music.

Incorporated in this study are the research of historians, ethnomusicologists, and performers, and the first-hand testimony of those involved in the creation and performance of Reich’s music. This study also draws upon this author’s performing and pedagogical experience to illustrate problems encountered when learning and performing some of Reich’s works, and to suggest ways of overcoming them.

Issues presented are applicable especially to scholars and performers who wish to gain detailed understanding of Reich’s music through cross-cultural analysis, and to music educators who embrace non-Western musicianship as a means of developing practical skills that can be applied to the performance of Western art music.