

**T**he first part of the manuscript discusses the

and performers alike, reaching out from the present to extend both into the past and the future, reaffirming existing collectivities and creating new ones. Take, for instance, the September 8, 2007, performance in Washington, D.C., to mark the advent of the Ethiopian Millennium.<sup>3</sup> More than five thousand D.C.-area Ethiopian immigrants<sup>4</sup> turned out for the concert, which provided a bracketed moment for members of the Ethiopian diaspora community in D.C. to reaffirm their identities as Ethiopians, in solidarity with (but also in opposition to) others dispersed around the world. That Ethiopians in the homeland marked the passage of the millennium with a celebratory concert, too, provides fascinating data for comparative studies, discussed briefly in my conclusion.

The D.C. concert was divided into three parts: sacred music (*zema*) of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; cultural music (*bahālawī*), a category subsuming traditional secular instrumental, vocal, and dance styles; and modern or popular

music (*zāmānawī*), incorporating aspects of international musical genres and instrumental resources that have entered into Ethiopian musical experience as part of twentieth-century transnational discourse and cultural circulation. Each section reinforced the significance of musical styles named and conceived as separate musical categories derived from the Ethiopian homeland. But the concert didn't simply map an idealized landscape of musical styles from the past or evoke nostalgia for the Ethiopian homeland. Through performance it brought to life the humanistic domains of religion, ethnicity, and nationalism, which continue to engage diaspora Ethiopians. The concert allowed the Ethiopian American community to acknowledge (EuThr) 25 -1.13 ] TJ T\* s by Tcmea fromitses as Ethimthe e F

this concert audience into a congregation. The majority of Ethiopians living in diaspora are Orthodox Christians, propelled into exile when their historic church lost its preeminent position, as the emperor at its head was deposed and Orthodox Christianity forfeited its status as the official religion of the state. The reestablishment of their churches in the United States and the continued performance of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian liturgy at once lend life and renewed vigor to a venerable belief system and the institutions that sustain it.

An ensemble of four traditional Ethiopian minstrels, two playing six-stringed lyres (*krar*) and two playing one-stringed bowed lutes (*mas̄nqo*), began the second section of the concert with two hours of cultural music. The lyres and lutes sounded traditional, pentatonic Ethiopian melodies in unison, with individual instruments ornamenting the tunes in slightly different ways, giving rise at moments to an intense heterophony. A fifth musician tapped traditional rhythmic patterns on an electronic drum machine. This mainly traditional instrumental ensemble accompanied several well-known Ethiopian cultural singers, who sang in Ethiopian vernacular languages, in alternation with lively performances of Ethiopian dances by a troupe of three men and three women who changed costumes after each number to represent various important Ethiopian ethnic communities.

Competing ethnic identities, which always simmered beneath the surface of pre-revolutionary Ethiopian national life, have become a looming political issue in Ethiopia since the 1974 revolution and an even more sensitive subject under the post-1991 federalist policies. The Ethiopian diaspora, which incorporates Ethiopian immigrants from a range of ethnic backgrounds, continues to en-

gage with its various ethnic and regional heritages on multiple levels: ethnicity is at once a marker of identity as well as a source of dissent within intense diasporic political processes. The concert announcer in D.C. underscored the strong political valence of cultural musics performed on the millennial occasion by remarking at one point during the show, somewhat ironically, "This will go on until we get through all the ethnic groups."

After a long intermission, during which a large, raised bandstand was erected center stage for the third part of the show, a brass-dominated jazz band of the sort that has accompanied popular music in Ethiopia since the late 1960s took its place.<sup>6</sup> As the band sounded the well-known instrumental introduction to "Tizita," the most popular Ethiopian musical symbol of nostalgia and longing for the homeland, the beloved Ethiopian singer Mahmoud Ahmed sudnia.000J T\* -.0005 Tc.0184 v

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