

JAN KAZIMIERZ KOZŁOWSKI

Institute of Musicology, University of Wrocław
ORCID: 0009-0004-5958-591X

Marovany on the Sample-Based Beat: the use of Electronic Equipment by Contemporary Malagasy Musicians

ABSTRACT: Nowadays, music is mainly produced by electronic equipment. Many of these tools, such as synthesizers, samplers, VST plugins or DAW programs are associated with popular music genres composed in the West. However, they are also used in other geographical areas, including Madagascar. The question is whether these tools would not serve to lead artists away from local traditions in favor of kinds of music created in Europe and North America, potentially identified with freedom and welfare. To answer this query, three possible approaches should be brought together: 1) completely preservative in relation to the traditions of the region; 2) combining local tendencies with Western trends; 3) totally rejecting the usus of Malagasy music. Examples of videos with songs shared on YouTube were provided for each group. The analysis focused primarily on rhythmic patterns, instrumentation, melodics and the language in which the lyrics were written. It turns out that despite the stereotypically understood connection between technological conveniences and culture of Occident, there is a quite firm commitment to tradition among artists of Madagascar, which is why the first and second approaches are more popular.

KEYWORDS: Madagascar, malagasy music, samples, rhythmic patterns, music genres, tradition.

Introduction

One of the key elements that made it easier for most societies in the 20th and 21st centuries to function is electricity. The second one, without which the average resident of the West finds it difficult to imagine his existence, is the Internet. Both of these inventions are undoubtedly essential for the activities of the vast majority of corporations, companies, and state or public institutions today. Technological development has not left the world of music either. An artist living in economically advanced countries today has access to diverse types of equipment with which he can compose works. Besides microphones, amplifiers and speakers for acoustic instruments, the music market is

full of physical synthesizers, DAWs, virtual instruments or sound samples that sometimes serve as the creator's entire or only equipment. Music genres such as R'n'B, rap and electronic dance music largely make use of the latter type of tools.

Going beyond the framework of eurocentrism, questions arise about the occurrence of the above and other types of music in countries that are less developed economically and technologically. When trying to study this phenomenon, the methodological problems of the issue become apparent. The example inquiry 'do they do rap in East African countries?' is a wrong way to ask the question. Since there is a greater probability that at least one citizen of a given country of that continent has made a song in this genre, the answer to it must be affirmative, but it does not solve the implicitly understood matter. On the other hand, trying to calculate 'how often hip-hop music is created in this region' or 'how many rappers live there and how many songs they have recorded' seems to be impossible to undertake, and even in hypothetical assumptions the result will be more or less approximate.

In order to research the selected issue, a more effective presentation of the problem of consideration would be the question 'how should we understand and classify individual, currently available to us songs by rappers from East African countries?'. This approach may bring better results for several reasons. Firstly, because existing songs must be analysed, not hypothetical works, regardless of whether they formally have a reason for existence. Their representativeness in this situation seems to be of secondary importance, as we have little chance of listening to and describing all works of this type, let alone predicting what and how many more will be created. Secondly, works of culture do not form in a vacuum. They are always the result of human activity in relation to other creators and receivers. Thirdly, musical genres themselves can be treated as collections of individual compositions that are in specific relationships with each other. Musical works that draw on the same folk tradition tend to exhibit a greater number of shared features than those that do not.

This understanding can be rearranged into the subject of this article. Namely, after familiarizing oneself with the literature on the subject, one can generally assume that Madagascar as a country in the 21st century has specific musical traditions and inhabitants who are predisposed to create modern popular music. This commonly held view raises the following questions:

- Can Malagasy songs be found on the Internet, and if so, what kind?
- What musical genres are of potential interest to music makers in Madagascar?
- What is the characteristic approach of Malagasy musicians towards Western and local musical genres?
- How do they use electronic equipment?

A partial answer can be found in the dictionary entry 'Madagascar' by August Schmidhofer and Michel Domenichini-Ramiaramanana in the *New Grove Dictionary of Musics and Musicians*. In the fifth subsection devoted entirely to popular music they write:

The modern popular music of Madagascar is deeply rooted in local traditions. Some genres, none the less, are found throughout the country. The *salegy*, a rapid bimmetrical dance, was invented in the north-west in the 1960s and was soon taken up by groups all over the country. The *basesa* of the east coast, the *sigôma* of the north, the *baoenjy* of the north-west and the *tsapiky* and *kinetsanetsa* of the south are other examples of a flourishing dance-music of the inhabitants of the coastal districts, or *côtiers*, which is distinct from the more vocally orientated popular music of the highlands.

Since the 1970s there have been stronger influences from Africa, particularly Kenya (*benga*), South Africa (*mbaqanga*) and the former Zaïre (*soukous*, *kwassa kwassa*), from the nearby islands of Réunion and Mauritius (*sega*) and from the Caribbean (*zouk*). The activities of the local recording companies Discomad and Kaiamba greatly encouraged this music but were superseded at the end of the 1980s by the production of cassettes. At the same time, Malagasy music rose sharply in popularity on the 'world music' market of the Western world (Domenichini-Ramiaramana, M., & Schmidhofer, A., 2001, p. 529).

The information provided by the researchers can be treated as a preliminary outline for considering issues related to the currently created music of Madagascar. Summarizing the above paragraphs, the following conclusion emerges from them. In the second half of the previous century, the inhabitants of the island state managed to create their own genres of popular music from different areas, which took names from their mother tongue. They are strongly connected with local customs and the dominant role in them plays the dance character. However, they did not remain 'untouched', as musicians began to adapt elements of work from other African countries and even Caribbean islands. The first issue that can be addressed *ad vocem* to the above fragment is the influence of Western music on the work of the Malagasy. To what extent can the commonly understood lifestyle and the idea of prosperity of the Occident countries tempt Malagasy artists to draw inspiration from their musical output or even abandon the creation of local varieties of music in favor of those originating from Europe and North America? The second, indirectly related to the previous one, concerns the use of modern technology in the process of composing music. To what extent do samples, VST plug-ins, DAWs or MIDI controllers seem convenient and attractive for Malagasy artists to use them or, what is more, to abandon the use of acoustic instruments associated with tradition? This question is related to the previous one in that subgenres of most types of music such as rap, R'n'B or electronic dance music are almost completely dependent on this type of equipment. These reflections should be treated as an aid to the questions presented earlier in relation to the available research material. If they are approached as a outright problem to be resolved, the answers may not be satisfactory, as in the case of the example issues in the first paragraph. Another aspect may be the phenomenon of contemporary art music, which, in addition to classical Western instrumentation, utilizes electronic equipment. However, this issue must be omitted due to the complexity of music education in Western music theory and the approach to European tradition in postcolonial countries. Above all, though, the main focus of this article is popular music.

All described songs come from the YouTube platform, except for examples from the *Dago Collection Hits* album published by Omda. The author of this text managed to get this album with music videos during field research in Madagascar

in July 2024, conducted together with students and lecturers from the University of Wrocław and Adam Mickiewicz University as well as August Schmidhofer from University of Vienna.

The analysis is based on a qualitative selection of music videos available on YouTube, chosen according to their relevance to the research questions. This approach does not aim at statistical representativeness but rather at identifying recurring tendencies and illustrative cases.

2. Hardware and software

The factor thanks to which listeners can perceive the musicians' songs is the possibility of recording them. From a logical point of view, Malagasy artist must first have access to recording equipment in order to publish his work on the Internet. It is worth noting a few seemingly non-obvious elements at this point. According to the National Geographic ranking made by Igor Szulim (2023), the Republic of Madagascar is the fifth of the ten poorest countries in the world, where people that works in a field are about 3/4 of all those able to labour (Szulim, 2023). The country is still struggling with numerous troubles such as limited access to clean water (The Division for Sustainable Development Goals, 2021), deforestation of land in order to expand agricultural fields (Suzzi-Simmons, 2023), corruption of most institutions in the service sector (Data Privacy Framework Program, n.d.) or even the low level of education of over half of the young citizens (Education Policy and Data Center, 2018). The most significant problem from the perspective of the subject of this article is the poor electrification of the country, compared to Western countries. According to data provided by the World Bank Group (2024), '7 out of 10 Malagasy people still do not have access to electricity' (World Bank Group, 2024). This information is crucial when considering issues related to electronic equipment powered by electricity. In a country whose economy is mainly based on agriculture, with poorer access to electricity, it is necessarily harder to develop a music market, especially when it comes to types of activities that are primarily dependent on access to electricity. It would be difficult to expect that an African island nation with a population of 30.33 million will be able to select as many producers as any European country with a similar population. Returning to the topic from the previous part, the estimates provided would be a more or less accurate approximation. Nevertheless, at first glance, citizens of a country struggling with a lack of electricity for household appliances will have less opportunity to spend it on electronics, if they have money for it at all. The issue of having a good quality microphone than expensive software with virtual instruments is a complex issue, because piracy also comes into play here.

Regardless of the above data, the entertainment industry is developing in the Malagasy country. Without a doubt, music can potentially be used by local artists as an interesting diversion for tourists' holidays. The issue in this case is the target group of given cultural works. Who will a potential musician from Madagascar share his or her art for? The answer can be found by analyzing the

songs published on YouTube by Malagasy people. An example would be a channel called LAMOZIKA (n.d.). Most of the recordings currently shared on it are music videos for songs in which the lyrics are sung in Malagasy. The Information tab presents data on the channel in French, the second official language of the African island state. Questions about the attractiveness of the content for the aforementioned vacationist and the possibility of understanding it (both linguistically and culturally) are discursive. On this channel, we can find works created using acoustic instruments such as drums or accordion, as well as those amplified or powered by electricity (electric and bass guitar, KORG synthesizer or samples). A prime example of the latter type are videos presenting musicians working on a given project in front of a computer. Worth mentioning here is the music video for the song *TSY HAGNEKY HO RESY* by Henry Paul (LAMOZIKA, 2024). The recording shows moments of mixing the tracks of the song in FL Studio on a computer in a recording studio. Another material could be a cover of the song *Diso Calcul* by Wendy Cathalina performed by Tela (LAMOZIKA, 2021). The visual path shows the producer sitting at a computer and a MIDI keyboard on the left side of the screen and the singer in front of a microphone on the right. Behind the musician's back, a fragment of the monitor screen is visible, on which there are audio tracks of the beat made in the same DAW as Paul's. Two examples are sufficient, because other films of this type shared by the LAMOZIKA channel do not differ much from those described. Although the presented phenomena may seem too detailed, as an example they outline a certain picture. Some artists are able to afford to use modern technological solutions, such as computer software for creating and processing sound, originating from the West. The next issue is the way of using the available tools. Referring to the initial considerations, does such equipment seem to Malagasy musicians as a new way to create music characteristic of the region? Apart from the use of electronic equipment, the above examples were similar in style to the musical work of the Malagasy. Or maybe these artists want to break with tradition in favour of genres cultivated in Europe or North America? Fruity Loops itself is known as one of the most popular computer programs for creating electronic music or rap beats, on the basis of which many tutorials are created. There is a high probability of both of these phenomena occurring simultaneously among individual artists or groups. While presenting percentage tendencies may be difficult or variable, it is more useful to describe them using individual examples.

3. Pieces with typical features of Malagasy music

Identifying characteristic elements in the types of Malagasy music is not an easy task. The authors of the aforementioned entry in NGD themselves did not provide details about *salegy*, *tsapiky* or *basesa*, but only the regions of the island state from which these types of creativity originate. An additional aspect that complicates this description is the issue of emic and etic. To what extent artists and receivers representing the same cultural circle will recognize certain phenomena in given songs as 'theirs' and others as 'foreign'. Undoubtedly, one

can capture certain features that are recognizable for music performed in Madagascar by analyzing individual songs on YouTube. In addition to the indigenous instruments such as Valiha or Marovany, the accordion and KORG synthesizers, which replace or co-exist with it, are very popular. The rhythmic basis can be both the drum kit known in the West, but also regional drums, a bamboo log hit with sticks and shakers, made today from sand and a metal can of mosquito repellents. Within the individual subgenres, basic rhythmic patterns are noticeable, specifying the instruments of the drum kit, usually performing specific hits. For *salegy* performed in 6/8, the foot plays the first eighth of the tripartite rhythmic group (the first and fourth eighth of the bar), while the open hi-hat plays the second (the second and fifth). In turn, for *tsapiky* in 4/4, the foot plays on odd eighth notes, the hi-hat hits sixteenth notes in place of the second and sixth eighth notes as the first hit between the foot and the snare drum, while the latter hits on even eighth notes (the second hit of the sixteenth note in the case of the second and sixth eighth notes ('two-and and six-and')). Both selected subgenres are performed at a fairly fast tempo (in the case of *salegy* it can be around 220 quarter notes per minute and in *tsapiky* 160 for the meters selected above)¹.

a) ♩ = 220

b) ♩ = 160

Figure 1

Basic rhythmic patterns for *salegy* (a) and *tsapiky* (b). Additionally, a shaker part was added for the first musical genre.

Note. Example transcribed by J. Kozłowski.

The question arises about contemporary songs that meet some of these guidelines, but use electronic equipment for this purpose. In the above-mentioned LAMOZIKA channel, you can find tracks whose individual layers were produced

¹The above description and transcription are indicative in nature. The choice of meter is exemplary only for the purpose of approximating the phenomenon, because depending on the opinions of researchers and analyses of individual works, a different measure may be determined. The tempo was determined based on metronome calculations in the Musescore.

in DAWs. The first example is the song *TOJO NY TIAKO* by Alden (LAMOZIKA, 2024), in which the drum kit was replaced by samples. Melodic instrumentation of the backing consists of guitar, accordion (the very beginning of the song) and KORG. The same is true for the song *Mifankatiava* by Ali Special (LAMOZIKA, 2024). In addition to the drum samples, a popular sample of a woman's voice (the so-called 'vox') can be heard, saying the words 'purchase your tracks today'². This sound is known in the music production environment of the Western world. The third example is *Sambany hikarama* by Venalisoa (LAMOZIKA, 2024). While in the previous examples the rhythmic backing was created by samples, in this artist's song it is played on a drum kit. What distinguishes it is the use of a clear autotune attached to the vocals. The fourth track worth noting is *Mitorajofo* by Kapitsany (LAMOZIKA, 2024), where the rhythmic layer is provided by a drum kit, but there are also hi-hat and snare samples from drum machines. The first of the drum samples comes from a machine called Roland TR-808, while the second is a recognizable sample used in rap subgenres such as trap or drill³. The fifth and last discussed track from LAMOZIKA (2024) in this segment is *Bonne année* by Yo Jays. The sampled percussion backing combines with both the accordion, marovana and valiha sections (acoustic instruments) played on both sides of the panorama (left and right, respectively).

It is worth describing Malagasy songs of the same style, found on other channels, for comparison. In addition to LAMOZIKA, a group of Malagasy musicians called Teints Record Officiel (n.d.) is active on YouTube. Although the name resembles a record label, there is not much data to be found in the Information tab regarding the project itself. As for the content, similarly to the previously described channel, you can find music videos, films with original music, covers, etc. An example of typical music for Madagascar is *Bohia (Ody e)*, written by Nathan Gabri (Teints Records Officiel, 2022), one of the leading representatives of this profile. The beat was made of samples and sounds of virtual instruments from VST plug-ins, including the use of an accordion. The vocals are covered in autotune. The next track is *Somaiko* by G5 (Teints Records Officiel, 2019). As in the previously discussed track, the drum backing is made of sound samples, and the melodic layer of the beat is made up of accordion, marovany and valiha. The last track worth mentioning here is *Lehilahy bôjo* by vocalist DEE SAM (Teints Records Officiel, 2021). In it, drum samples are combined with guitar, xylophone and synthetic sounds, including the KORG synthesizer.

There are more channels presenting the collective work of Malagasy musicians, separate official profiles of artists and less popular accounts sharing their own or other people's music on YouTube. So what songs with a similar style can be found on them? Examples worth paying attention to are *Tiribonaly* by Bawar (BAWAR, 2021), *2024* by Nael (NAEL, 2023) and *Velogno* by Smaven (2018). In the first of them, samples of acoustic drums were most likely used, while in

² Used by some producers as a tag, i.e. a sample with a voiced utterance of a specific phrase placed between the audio tracks of a song in order to emphasize someone's authorship, see fxccecup (2017).

³ Sometimes called as overused trap snare, see: SampleKrate (2016); smooth motion (2020).

the other two, drum-machine samples can be clearly heard. What they have in common is the use of guitar and synthetic sounds, in Bawar and Smaven it is KORG. Additionally, in the song of the second of the mentioned, an accordion appears.

The above-mentioned works of contemporary vocalists and producers of Malagasy popular music are only emblematic, because more similar pieces can be found. The conclusion from their description suggests that the ties with local musical traditions are still strong among artists, and technological conveniences such as samples, the KORG synthesizer and VST plug-ins strengthen rather than weaken them. It is therefore necessary to look at pieces that not only use electronic devices but also draw inspiration from popular music created in the West.

4. Pieces combining different styles in Malagasy music

Before starting the description, it is worth noting that in the era of globalization, it is increasingly difficult for specific pieces of music not to use influences from outside a given cultural circle. In such a situation, however, it is necessary to focus on songs that clearly draw patterns from trends originating outside of Madagascar. Another problem standing in the way may be the etic and emic approach. The extent to which the rhythmic pattern of a given musical background is a 'modernized' and slowed down *tsapiky* and the extent to which it is a local variety of afrobeat will be a matter of dispute. The opinions of individual Malagasy creators and recipients may differ internally, let alone externally (i.e. with representatives of the non-Malagasy community). Nevertheless, there are pieces in which elements from the currently cultivated Western music are unquestionably audible. In the case of rhythm, it is primarily the use of other patterns in the section of drum samples of a given backing, which come from subgenres of Western popular music, such as trap, drill, pop or R'n'B. The melodics of these subgenres can also have an influence on Malagasy musicians, which is why they will use other musical scales (primarily blues, minor pentatonic or minor scales themselves). Western harmony and instrumentation, due to their popularity, inevitably function as a source of inspiration for the creators of the African island state.

On the LAMOZIKA channel one can find several examples. The first one is *TSARATSARA TSY LANY* by Stephanie (LAMOZIKA, 2021). In this song, the traditional instrument is the accordion, which plays to synthetic drum sounds that perform a rhythmic pattern derived from trap (primarily the hi-hat hitting sixteenth notes and sometimes smaller rhythmic values (so-called 'hi-hat rolls')). The melody sung by the artist is typical of Malagasy music. The same elements can be found in the song *K'ahoako* by vocalist Ndomax MC (LAMOZIKA, 2020). The beat features the familiar sound of the snare drum, described in the previous part of the text. The third example is *AGNARAKA ANAO* by Azmir (LAMOZIKA, 2021). Again, as in the aforementioned, the melody is characteristic of Malagasy music. Used samples are played by rhythmic patterns that are also typical to this region. The different element is found in the instrumentation used. The well-

known synthesizers and xylophone-preset are combined with a brass section from VST. The use of the latter may indicate both the influence of genres such as rap or R'n'B, where this sound is often encountered, or the desire to use a different color of the instrument, which is available in the VST plug-in. The fourth piece is Vladimir's *Kiala ngita* (LAMOZIKA, 2024). While the rhythm of the song is common among Malagasy musicians, the melody and instrumentation have been changed under the influence of Western popular music. The only melodic instrument characteristic of the described region in the background is the xylophone. In addition to the guitar and an instrument resembling Rhodes' piano in terms of tone, the muffled and reverberated timbre of saxophone could be misinterpreted as a trumpet. Associations with contemporary popular music in Latin American countries may be correct, but not necessarily accurate. Undoubtedly, the melody of the piece itself is different from the rest of the work typical of the African island state. The fifth and final example that requires special attention is *AZA MIHE-MOTRA* by Faucon (LAMOZIKA, 2024). The beat can be classified as a drill due to the tresillo rhythm played by the hi-hat, the snare drum hits on the third and eighth eighth notes (on 'two and four-i'), and the glissando of the synthetic bass (popular in the producers' jargon '808 slides'). The melodic instruments used are a guitar and a synthesizer. More importantly, after singing two verses and a chorus, a drum kit appears for a moment playing the *tsapiky* rhythm, and then at the end of the song it connects with the drill loop.

Similar pieces can be found on the Teints Record Officiel channel. The first song worth discussing is *Jangobo* by Nathan Gabri and a vocalist Jess Cihak (Teints Record Officiel, 2023). Drum-machine samples with bass play drill as a rhythmic-harmonic layer for the melody played by valiha. Sometimes this pattern is changed to those typical of Malagasy music. The co-author of this piece has written two more pieces, which are stylistically similar to those discussed in the previous paragraph. *Masoko Mena* (Teints Record Officiel, 2023), through its melody and instrumentation (guitar and trumpet), may evoke the same associations as Vladimir's song. In turn, in *Majunga Tafaray* (Teints Record Officiel, 2022), whose rhythm is *salegy*, a trap loop appears at the end on synthetic drum samples.

Other channels also have similar examples. The first is Sylvann Ratsimandresa's *Fa io ny anay* (Sylvanno RatsimandresyVEVO, 2015). In a song with instrumentation and melody typical of Malagasy music, a trap loop played by electronic snare drum samples appears in the second verse. A similar situation occurs in the song *Tangôlongôlogno* by Jeddy (2022), but the local samples of the kick drum, hi-hat and snare drum playing the trap rhythm pattern appear temporarily as a link between parts. The last example worth mentioning is *Tsisy_M_Pepe* by artists with pseudonyms Tsiry, Jack Dad and Shyn (2022). The instrumentation consisting of synthetic sounds from VST plug-ins and the melody played by them is different from the songs presented so far. The main rhythmic pattern played by the samples is the only element characteristic of Malagasy music. It is changed between parts in favor of a temporarily appearing trap loop.

There are even more songs that combine Western and Malagasy popular music. The above show mostly conservative tendencies towards local performing traditions. This is usually audible in the instrumentation and melodic layer, to which

the rhythmic patterns of popular output of Occident are adapted. Trap and drill performed on drum-machine samples enjoy great interest. The last issue is the songs that differ stylistically from typical Malagasy music.

5. Pieces with a completely different style from Malagasy music

The last part of this article consists of musical works by the inhabitants of Madagascar, which do not refer to traditional art. To what extent did rap, R'n'B or electronic dance music seem to be interesting, so that the given performers would devote themselves to them, while giving up local artistic tendencies? This question is related to the problem of determining proportions. It must certainly be taken into account that vocal-instrumental works with Malagasy text about the specifics of life in Africa will be aimed not only, but primarily at receivers who speak this language and understand the realities described in regional jargon, idioms and wordplay. In addition to that, the number of songs could depend on the level of interest of the listeners.

On the LAMOZIKA channel, you can find R'n'B, rap and other popular music genres. The first example is *IAMBESA DAYAH* by an artist called Bigo'rah Tatobe (LAMOZIKA, 2020). The vocalist's voice resembles a singing technique characteristic of dancehall. No instrumentation typical for music of the Madagascar were used in the beat. In melody, it also does not resemble local works. Due to the way of singing, *DOUBLE FAGNAHY* by Faht Boy (LAMOZIKA, 2021) can be classified as belonging to the same musical genre. It should be noted that the beat is made in a trap style, as evidenced by the rhythmic patterns of sound samples of electronic drums (including the previously described snare drum). The melodic instruments in the song are primarily a section of synthetic brass winds and a piano from a VST plug-in. Examples of pop or R'n'B include *Izy* by Fabrice (LAMOZIKA, 2020). The backing consists of a piano, guitar (acoustic instruments) and sound samples of drums. The melody of the beat and vocalist is atypical for the work of Madagascar. Among the rap songs, *Zandra Kely vomanonga* by JAUKAH FLEM (LAMOZIKA, 2023) emerges. Elements typical of drill are presented not only in the rhythmic pattern of the drums and effects of the popular '80s', but also through other samples (including a female voice passed through delay) and the melody of synthetic sounds. The last example, also of hip-hop music is *Amboara* by The Young Predicateur (LAMOZIKA, 2021). The subgenre to which this song can be classified is trap. As in the previous song, this can be concluded from the drums, bass and also the instrumentation (bells, string section and other synthetic sounds from VST plug-ins). Both examples present a style typical of their subgenres adequate to the Western patterns from which they come.

Teints Record Officiel also provides tracks that deviate from the conventions of 'generally established' Malagasy artistry. An example of contemporary R'n'B on a trap rhythmic background can be *La mélodie du quartier* by a group called MPANDROTSY (Teints Records Officiel, 2020). The beat consists of a melody played by a guitar to a loop of electronic drum samples and harmonic support of the bass. Interestingly,

the song, unlike the previously discussed ones, is sung in French. The same subgenre includes a song by Oashna Tess, whose title is *Anao io* (Teints Records Officiel, 2022). The melody of the background is played by the string section, Rhodes piano and other synthetic sounds of virtual instruments. The last example worth mentioning here is *Mifohaza* by Nathan Gabri and Fab's Brownz (Teints Records Officiel, 2019). The first of the authors sings and raps individual fragments of the text. The beat, as in the previous cases, is made in the trap style, where the melody is realized by the piano and synthetic instruments. In all of the songs presented above, there is no clear reference to the musical tradition of Madagascar.

Music with the same or similar style can be found on other Malagasy YouTube channels. One of them is AFVO, which states in its Information tab that it is an 'entreprise de production musicale et une plateforme de médias basée à Antananarivo' (AFVO, n.d.). The first example made public on their profile may be *Bonbon Sugar* by artist JESS GOLAGOLA (AFVO, 2021). The artist raps and sings the lyrics using autotune to a trap beat, where the melody is played by a flute. Another rap song is *Halluciné* by YOUSSOUFA (AFVO, 2021). The artist raps the verses and sings the choruses (also via autotune) in French. It is difficult to classify this song into a specific subgenre of this type of music. It is clear that the rhythmic patterns of the rapping voice are two-part and not three-part (so-called 'Migos flow'), as in the case of the verses from the previously discussed song. The melodic layer of the backing is played by a piano and string section to electronic drum samples. The last example from the AFVO channel that deserves attention is *Wendy* by Slajih Lion with a feature of Blend Men (AFVO, 2018). This song, unlike the previously described songs, can be classified as dancehall due to the singing technique characteristic of this genre. In the beat, the main melody line is played by a guitar from a VST plug-in.

In addition to AFVO, there are other channels on YouTube that share songs from genres of popular music of the West. Examples of rap that belong to the broadly understood trap genre include *Lohamboto* by a rapper nicknamed Zakai on his official profile Zakai Officiel (2018), *Faloumé* by rappers named Djovi and Gloomy (2020) on the profile of the latter, or even *Aza atôtô @nè* by a performer nicknamed K-Ji Bass (Sixman^É, 2018). In the case of other subgenres of this type of music, the matter seems more complex. The first one to mention is the RAP GASY Archives channel (n.d.). This profile provides both newly created musical pieces and archive recordings in the history of hip-hop created in Madagascar, including during the popularity of the subgenre called boom bap. One of the most representative are songs by the band Da Hopp, including from their album *Fanantenana*⁴, such as *Tadidiko tsara* or even *Vita gasy*. Another channel that publishes rap songs is ADDLYCONCEPT. In the Information tab, the creators provide information about their profile, which focuses on 'creating visually stunning and thought-provoking videos that complement the music' (ADDLYCONCEPT, n.d.). Examples include *Bang Bang* by Anda Faka (ADDLYCONCEPT, 2024) and *Popopoh* by Nas Kas

⁴ Due to limited access to sources and a lack of studies, it is difficult to determine whether this was the group's first album. It certainly seems to be the only one available on YouTube. The group is active on its official facebook website (DA HOPP Ofisjaly, n.d.). The channel RAP GASY archives (n.d.) a playlist with all the songs from the album.

featuring Saboodak (ADDLYCONCEPT, 2015). The first song is made in the style of hardcore rap, where the performers rap the lyrics in an intense voice over the background music from samples (both the melody and the drums). The second is an interpretation of 50 Cent's *What Up Gangsta* (Jackson, 2003), where the performers borrowed the beat and the title phrase from the New York artist (this phenomenon can be considered a remix or a follow up⁵). Apart from RAP GASY Archives and ADDLYCONCEPT, this type of music can be found on other, lesser-known channels such as DoubleA Music or PRODIGE records, where mainly songs by the rapper with the pseudonym Lous'fah are made available, such as *Feon'i Lous'Fah* (DoubleA Music, 2024; PRODIGE record, 2017). None of the above-mentioned songs contain a clear reference to the work characteristic of Madagascar.

In the case of other genres of music, pop and R'n'B have wide currency. One of the recognizable performers of this type of work is Shyn. Examples from his official channel include *Confiné* (Shyn, 2020), *Mila Fahazavana* (Shyn, 2023) or *Angalaka Ano* (Shyn, 2019). The first two of the mentioned songs are sung on a beat with rhythmic patterns characteristic to trap. The musical background of the latter is created from only melodic instruments, where the piano and string section dominate. Similarly to the previously described songs, there is an imperceptible reference to the work typical for the Malagasy people.

The last issue in this section worth noting is the album *Dago Collection Hits*. It contains songs by artists such as Shyn, Marion and Y-Zit. Almost all of them are sung in pop and R'n'B style. The exception is the song *Zaza Dago* by the rapper with the pseudonym Suprem, where the lyrics are performed in French. None of the songs on the album have the typical characteristics of Malagasy music.



Figure 2
Front and back covers of the *Dago Collection Hits* album.

⁵ Citing excerpt of someone's lyrics, rhythmic pattern, original melody or sample as a contact with a listener who understands the context.

6. Conclusion

The above-presented works by Malagasy musicians are only a small part of the constantly growing artistic output of this region. Nevertheless, its diversity shows that the issue of creators' tendencies towards trends in the increasingly globalizing music market is also complex in the case of music targeted at local listeners. At this point, it is worth answering the questions posed in the first part of this text. The answer to the first question, which is 'can Malagasy songs be found on the Internet, and if so, what kind?' is as follows. Although this assumption would require a more detailed study of the phenomenon, there is undoubtedly a strong connection with the local musical tradition, even in the case of creators reaching for types of music originating from Western countries. The second question, concerning 'what musical genres are of potential interest to music makers in Madagascar?', seems to be more problematic. Based on the material described and available sources, it's much better to inquire about the tastes of a potential listener of Malagasy music. Attempting to capture audience preferences can be helpful in this case for two reasons. First, because musicians also listen to the types of music they perform, and sometimes listeners – including Malagasy ones – are more or less advanced and engaged artists. Secondly, 'indicative' descriptions of artistic preferences may be important for the creators themselves and for the record companies that make available works that listeners like or identify with. While the popularity of certain videos may provide some insight into audience preferences, it does not directly reflect the intentions or stylistic choices of music creators. For instance, when browsing the videos shared on the LAMOZIKA channel through the 'Popular' filter, only one of the first 10 videos is there, and it is the video for the song Stephanie. Apart from her and the song *TIAKO LOATRA IANA* by the artist called Lola (LAMOZIKA, 2020), all the others show completely typical features of the Malagasy music tradition. The situation is slightly different in the case of the Teints Record Officiel channel, where none of the described songs are in the top ten, and those that are there show mostly conservative tendencies. For the creators, this anecdotal information could mean that the general audience expects such content from them above all. It would be an oversimplification to assume that Malagasy musicians prefer types of music from their own region rather than from outside, although this opinion seems accurate in the face of those presented above. This answer also refers to the third question, which concerns the characteristics of 'the approach of Malagasy musicians towards Western and local musical genres'. The fourth and final issue, namely 'how do they use electronic equipment' seems to be an obvious question, but it is worth considering it from the perspective of equipment. The genres mentioned in the quoted text from NGD were created in the times before the era of samples, DAWs and virtual instruments from VST plug-ins. The issue here may not be so much the possibility of using them, but rather the preferences regarding choice. To what extent the creators of *salegy* and *tsapiky* will prefer to use drum samples rather than an acoustic drum kit is another issue that would require research. Without a doubt, computer software and sound samples

have been adopted by Malagasy musicians, as evidenced by the pieces created using them.

Another issue requiring description is the interpretation of the presented works. This applies in particular to those that show different tendencies from traditional artistry. The first phenomenon that comes to mind is the use of a language other than Malagasy. In three cases, the lyrics to the song were written in French. Should this phenomenon be understood as a desire to present the work of Madagascar beyond the borders of the island state (primarily the rest of the Francophone world) or is it the result of the belief that Molière's language is more suitable for this type of music or the content contained in them? The second of these suggestions does not seem to be accurate, as the presented rap songs sung in Malagasy outnumber the French ones. What is more, in the case of the rapper Suprem, there are his songs on YouTube, which are in Malagasy. The second element concerning rap in Madagascar is the issue of the connection with hip-hop culture. To what extent do performers of this music from the island state show a desire to identify with the broadly understood movement known under the above name? An interesting case here is the song *Nas Kas*. We should start with the pseudonym itself, which may come from a combination of two renowned American rappers – Nas and Ras Kass. The choice of the background is also not accidental. As an artist from New York, 50 Cent fits into the so-called 'East Coast Hip Hop' stream. In turn, in the lyrics of the Malagasy rapper, the phrase 'East Coast' appears many times, which in this case may mean the area of Madagascar inhabited by him. This issue must be left for further research on the lyrics and other songs by *Nas Kas*.

At the end, it is worth indicating topics for further consideration as part of the continuation of this subject. Issues requiring analysis and interpretation include primarily:

- The connections between Malagasy rap and traditional Malagasy music by artists from the 1990s and early 21st centuries (including other songs from the album *Fanantenana* by Da Hopp).
- Beats combining trap with *salegy* or *tsapiky* (mainly productions released under the name *trap salegy type beat*),
- The work of producers and DJs from Madagascar classified as electronic dance music and their relationship with typically Malagasy work (performers such as Toloch or DeeJay Eliot and his *remix salegy*).

References

Data Privacy Framework Program (n.d.). *Madagascar – Corruption*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved October 25, 2025, from <https://www.privacyshield.gov/ps/article?id=Madagascar-corruption>

Domenichini-Ramiaramanana, M., & Schmidhofer, A. (2001). Madagascar. In S. Sadie & J. Tyrrell (Eds.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd ed., Vol. 14, pp. 526–529). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Education Policy and Data Center (2018). *Madagascar National Education Profile*. <https://www.epdc.org/node/240.html>
- Suzzi-Simmons, A. (2023). Status of deforestation of Madagascar. *Global ecology and Conservation*, 42, e02389.
- Szulim, I. (2023) Najbiedniejsze kraje świata. W tych państwach żyje się najciężej. *National Geographic Polska*. <https://www.national-geographic.pl/traveler/kierunki/najbiedniejsze-kraje-swiate-w-tych-panstwach-zyje-sie-najciezej/>
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2021). *Madagascar: Progress on achieving SDG 6*. <https://sdgs.un.org/basic-page/madagascar-34129>
- World Bank Group (2024). *Energy Access in Madagascar*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2024/09/19/energy-access-in-afe-madagascar>

Audiovisuals

- ADDLYCONCEPT (2015, March 23). *Nas Kas ft Saboodak – Popopoh (Official)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/fVvMeWKY6Ms>
- ADDLYCONCEPT (2024, November 15). *ANDA FAKA – BANG BANG (Official)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ezIDNCnscEk>
- ADDLYCONCEPT (n.d.). *Home* [YouTube channel]. YouTube. Retrieved October 30, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/@addlyconcept5052>
- AFVO (2018, June 11). *SLAJIH LION ft BLEND MEN-Wendy (AFVO VIDEO)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/PGyCOVwQhoQ>
- AFVO (2021, November 27). *JESS GOLAGOLA – Bonbon Sugar (AFVO VIDEO)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/au1oTIVoZXg>
- AFVO (2021, September 4). *YOUSSOUFA – Halluciné (AFVO VIDEO)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/jsFvxPOHpbA>
- AFVO (n.d.). *Home* [YouTube channel]. YouTube. Retrieved October 30, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/@AFVOMUSICS/featured>
- BAWAR (2021, November 25). *BAWAR – TIRIBONALY (Clip Officiel 2021)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/mzLNKtOrYnI>
- DA HOPP Ofisialy (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved October 30, 2025, from <https://www.facebook.com/DaHoppOfisialy>
- DoubleA Music (2024, July 16). *Lousf ah – feon'i lousfa version longue* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/zHELYXocfog>; (2017, April 9).
- fxccedup (2017, June 24). *PURCHASE YOUR TRACKS TODAY TAG* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/TBFizAsHm1c>
- Gloomy (2020, February 15). *Djovi x Gloomy – Faloumé (Clip officiel) Trap malgache*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/WwSiOciCoL4>
- Jackson, C. (Rapper). (2003). *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. [Musical Album]. Interscope Records.
- Jeddy (2022, August 7). *Jeddy – Tangôlongôlogno (Clip Officiel)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Ik6X-douMzo>
- LAMOZIKA. (2020, April 14). *NDOMAX MC – K'AHOAKO (NOUVEAUTE CLIP GASY 2020) HIRA TIAK* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/EYvNjDBHHGk>
- LAMOZIKA (2020, April 24). *BIGO'RAH TATOBE – IAMBESA DAYAH (CLIP OFFICIEL 2020) HIRA TIAKO* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/rEZqObSX7uQ>
- LAMOZIKA (2020, February 14). *FABRICE – IZY (NOUVEAUTE LYRICS OFFICIEL 2020)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/5t9hoqwPzHA>

- LAMOZIKA (2020, February 14). *LOLA – TIAKO LOATRA IANAO (MEDLEY OFFICIEL 2020 POUR LA CELEBRATION DU 20ème ANNIVERSAIRE)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/SbwKnb_9Df4
- LAMOZIKA (2021, April 12). *STEPHANIE – TSARATSARA TSY LANY (NOUVEAUTE CLIP GASY 2021)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/tbDlJ-_B7rA
- LAMOZIKA (2021, April 18). *WENDY CATHALINA – DISO CALCUL (COVER BY TELA)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/h1cS9kuyPAM>
- LAMOZIKA (2021, July 5). *THE YOUNG PREDICATEUR – AMBOARA (NOUVEAUTE GASY 2021)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/CQowNGoBDss>
- LAMOZIKA (2021, June 29). *FAHTA BOY – DOUBLE FAGNAHY (NOUVEAUTE GASY 2021)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/MTJC3Q1FWXc>
- LAMOZIKA (2021, March 11). *AZMIR – AGNARAKA ANAO (VIDEO LYRICS)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Miq8u3gdDuw>
- LAMOZIKA (2023, March 10). *JAUKAH FLEM – Zandry Kely vòmanonga (Nouveauté Clip Gasy 2023)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/aqiqYNRef4k>
- LAMOZIKA (2024, August 10). *HENRY PAUL – TSY HAGNEKY HO RESY (Nouveauté Gasy 2024)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/7lUJhxCpaz8>
- LAMOZIKA (2024, December 11). *FAUCON – AZA MIHEMOTRA (Nouveauté Gasy 2025)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/xS2S1sWdMbY>
- LAMOZIKA (2024, December 14). *ALDEN – TOJO NY TIAKO (Nouveauté Gasy 2024)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ATUdOKkQxWw>
- LAMOZIKA (2024, December 17). *Venalisoa – Sambany hikarama (Nouveauté Gasy 2025)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/egtvdfv34aY>
- LAMOZIKA (2024, December 26). *KAPITSANY – MITORAJOFI (Nouveauté Gasy 2025)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/QX5Uv_ZZZVQ
- LAMOZIKA (2024, December 27). *YO JAYS – BONNE ANNÉE (Nouveauté Gasy 2025)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/YPfkome_rQ
- LAMOZIKA (2024, November 5). *Vladmir – Kiala ngita (Nouveauté Gasy 2024)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Jy_K1JvJcSE
- LAMOZIKA (2024, October 10). *ALI SPECIAL – MIFANKATIAVA (Nouveauté Gasy 2024)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/LFbAmAnoF-c>
- LAMOZIKA (n.d.). *Home* [YouTube channel]. YouTube. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from <https://www.youtube.com/@LAMOZIKA261/featured>
- NAEL (2023, December 23). *Nael – 2024 (Official Music Video)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/JnLKDTGeo6M>
- PRODIGE record (2017, April 9). *Lous-Fah 'Feon'ï Lous-Fah'* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Kk5rsgCd8tU>
- RAP GASY archives (n.d.). Playlists [YouTube Channel]. YouTube. Retrieved October 30, 2025, from https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC-blyARegEdx6H9V_eyGZfbU3ToyQeLp
- SampleKrate (2016, December 10). *Overused Trap Snare* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/68dRnjt5RuA>
- Shyn (2019, February 6). *Shyn – Angalaka Ano (Feat Quatuor Squad X Davalt Records)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/7zYvv_Uaih8
- Shyn (2020, April 8). *Shyn – Confiné (Audio)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/va9_PH9jDjo
- Shyn (2022, October 23). *Shyn x Tsisy x Jack Dad Tsisy_M_Pepe* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/CPP952sr4vc>
- Shyn (2023, January 19). *Shyn-Mila Fahazavana* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/QZ7B5fzCO_I

- Sixman 𐌆𐌆𐌆 (2018, June 16). *K-Ji Bass – Aza atôô @nè (OFFICIAL VIDEO) By ADDLY CONCEPT* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/w5rqkoHrWao>
- Smaven (2018, November 16). *Smaven – Velogno (Clip Officiel)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/13eZsLjq5oE>
- smooth motion (2020, December 2). *OVERUSED TRAP SNARE SAMPLE/Free Sound Effect Download* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/mfw-uISor-g>
- Sylvanno RatsimandresyVEVO (2015, March 19). *Clip Marion Fa io ny anay* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/3BjSZg6yk-E>
- Teints Record Officiel (n.d.). *Home* [YouTube channel]. YouTube. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChk-FV_VXrIKkfDpFH1XmPw
- Teints Records Officiel. (2019, February 23). *G5 – SOMAIKO (Clip Officiel)* [Video]. YouTube <https://youtu.be/FhIiCKd4AKo>
- Teints Records Officiel. (2019, June 5). *NATHAN GABRI & FAB'S BROWNZ – Mifohaza (AUDIO) TEINTS RECORD* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/gpcUITlkxb8>
- Teints Records Officiel (2021, June 29). *DEE SAM – Lehilahy bôjo (Clip Officiel)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/blqZGTIUadk>
- Teints Records Officiel (2022, August 3). *NATHAN GABRI – Bohia (Ody e) [Vidéo]* [Video]. YouTube.
- Teints Records Officiel (2022, January 19). *OASHNA TESS – Anao io (Clip Officiel)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/cqNopO2cKEE>
- Teints Records Officiel (2022, September 23). *NATHAN GABRI – Majunga Tafaray (feat. Christine) (Clip Officiel)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/ZzhiBHqtlyU>
- Teints Records Officiel (2023, February 10). *NATHAN GABRI – Masoko Mena (Lyrics)* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/MBK_yoFHZ7A
- Teints Records Officiel (2023, February 24). *NATHAN GABRI & JESS CIKAH – Jangobo (Audio Lyrics)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/g1oxVjDNTyM>
- Teints Records Officiel (2020, September 25). *MPANDROTSY – La mélodie du quartier (Clip Officiel)* [Video] YouTube. <https://youtu.be/SGpMo6zNz5c>
- Zakai Officiel (2018, September 26). *ZAKAI – LOHAMBOTO (clip officiel) by Tanjona ANDRIAMAHALY* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/HEaso4yr4Jo>

