Preface

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It is a great pleasure for me as the director of the Institute for Music Theatre Research to write this foreword. This volume is a collection of stimulating essays all dealing with performative aspects of the arts in Africa, from the perspectives of literature, theatre, movies, music and cultural festivals. The articles published here were first presented at a conference which was held in March 2018 in Eldoret, Kenya, organized as a joint event by Moi University and the University of Bayreuth. My home institution was both represented by the Bayreuth International Graduate School for African Studies and our Research Institute at Schloss Thurnau. As the head of the latter institution I was very happy to be a part of this project.

Together with my academic assistant Dr. Marie-Anne Kohl, who is also an editor of this volume, we are trying to establish a new focus within our research on Music Theatre. As far as our Institute is concerned, Music Theatre is a broad phenomenon. While it is often identified merely as a genre of western art forms such as opera by other western institutions, our Institute's approach appreciates and underlines the fact that all kinds of constellations are involved. These performative constellations include the following factors. Music Theatre brings together images, the society, movement (emotional and physical) and of course music. This broad definition may be attributed to all kinds of musical performances, be it in the theatre or in concert halls. It may be as well attributed to what we call everyday performance constellations where music plays a big part in the presentation. With this, we look at music presentations also from a scenic perspective, always as something composite: there is no music without a specific visuality and a theatrical aspect to it. This can be found within a live situation or within media constellations.

With the project represented in this book, the Institute makes a first big step for its broader approach in collaborating with the institutions from Moi University and BIGSAS in order to investigate in non-Western performance in Music Theatre. As some of the presentations in the Eldoret Conference showed

and as the essays in this book demonstrate, the term music is a broad one. As the American composer and philosopher John Cage would argue, music can include many things ranging from all kinds of sounds such as the sound tracks and music in film to those found in other media as well as the performative situation of the everyday in a club or on the streets where musicians immediately react to the responses of the audience. There is no art form without the means of sound and the performative. Our Institute is therefore eager to be part of this project and to continue our collaboration with Moi University. I am looking forward to further joint work on the performative and music within Kenya.

This foreword also gives me a great opportunity to express a big thank you to all the people who made this collaboration as well as this book possible. First, I want to thank all our colleagues from Moi University, the presenters at the conference and the contributors to this volume. This includes especially Prof. Chris Odhiambo and Dr. Samuel Ndogo who supported this enterprise with great engagement. A great thank you also goes to my Bayreuth colleague Prof. Clarissa Vierke who helped the Music Theatre staff a great deal to connect with another culture and new field of research. I also want to thank Dr. Ricarda de Haas and Dr. Marie-Anne Kohl, who came up with the idea for the conference and put it together with great enthusiasm and a high sense of commitment. The topic of “Patronage, Intervention and Transformation” gave us a fantastic first opportunity to be able to explore together the African Performative Arts, for me from a Music Theatre research perspective for the first time. Finally, I want to thank BIGSAS for the generous funding of the conference.

I am looking forward to much more in the future!