

'FLOW LIKE A WATERFALL': THE METAPHORS OF KALULI MUSICAL THEORY¹

For Carl Voegelin

by Steven Feld

Relations between language and music have traditionally been addressed at two distinct levels of discourse. One is phenomenal and often taxonomic, addressing the boundaries of speech and song, prosody and intonation, text and tune, paralanguage and vocables, *sprechgesang* and *sprechstimme*, and motivation toward signifier or signified. The other level is analytical and sometimes abstract, addressing the adaptation of phonological and syntactic linguistic models to features of musical structure (a review and critique is Feld 1974).

Another set of language-music relations has more recently emerged as equally worthy of serious investigation. This newer discourse concerns musical vocabulary and terminology, not as word lists ("things" of culture) but as the metalinguistic denomination of musical concepts in relation to specific societal theories of musical form and performance. This set of concerns has clearly been stimulated by recent work in anthropological linguistics, culture and cognition, the ethnography of speaking, and ideational theories of culture. The growing literature contains recent reports on peoples of Africa (Keil 1979, Stone 1981) Oceania (Feld 1982, Zemp 1978, 1979), and the Americas (Powers 1980, Smith 1981, Tedlock 1980) just to mention a few.

Most of these studies have addressed specific dimensions of the language of musical discourse, and in this paper I will develop two important issues in detail: one concerns the nature of verbal representations of musical theory, the other concerns how theoretical thought can be coded in metaphors. The basic problem is: in what ways does metaphor systematize abstract ideas and provide verbal means for expressing the structure of musical experience? The first part of this paper makes some general remarks about lexical semantics, theory and metalanguage, polysemy and metaphor. The major section describes how the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea systematically metaphorize "water" and "sound" to express a theory of the form and performance of their vocal music. A final section briefly reflects on the significance of the linguistic and musical relationships analyzed.

I THE LINGUISTIC DIMENSION OF MUSICAL DISCOURSE

Language and Verbalization

Four propositions form the analytic basis of this paper.

(1) Language codes musical vocabulary in a lexicon and that lexicon makes it possible for speakers of the language (within obvious strati-