

YORUBA ART MUSIC: FRONTING THE PROGENITORS

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ABSTRACT

The bedrock of music genres in Africa today remains the traditional music. The western formal music education embraced by African schools during and after the scramble for Africa by the northern hemisphere has given 'colorations' to music genres both in the classroom and the larger society. Its legacies are found more in popular music. The most interesting thing is that essence of music remains undaunted in the faces of all new formalities in the educational system. Music still lives on stage and not on paper. This paper emerges as a derivative of the Yoruba Art Music (YAM) festival premiered in 2015 at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. With bibliographical evidences and substantial interaction with a non-Yoruba speaking music scholar this paper sufficed that the YAM festival is worth doing and is capable of solving other attendant issues in music scholarship.

Key Words: Yoruba art music, Traditional, Legacies, Music education, Popular music.

INTRODUCTION

The missionary who came to Nigeria in the 19th century came through the Yoruba land, in the Southwestern Nigeria. This gave early rise to western formal education in the area, of which music education was paramount. The Yoruba Art Music (YAM) festival emerged in 2015 with the concept of having discourse of what constitutes art music followed by stage production of Yoruba musical works. The authors involved non-Yoruba speaking scholars having in mind the conventional traits in African music, and only wanted to bring out the traits that point out identities from one region to another, to take part especially in the discourse. Prominent among the speakers was Onyee Nwankpa, one of the authors in this paper who is a Professor of Igbo abstraction, whose areas of specialization are composition, conducting and music therapy, with strong passion for African music. Professor Nwankpa's

contribution therefore based on his scholarship opinions of the YAM festival forms a substantial part of this paper. He speaks from a perspective of a non-Yoruba abstraction, looking at art music in the context of the Yoruba philosophical dais, the YAM progenitors, new adaptations and concludes with visionary objectives.

DISCUSSION

What is Art Music? In general, Art Music can be considered or viewed as a composition of a well-structured music reflecting education, technical and intellectual competency, logic, evocative of emotion or idea, and high degree of sonic artistry and creativity. Art Music is the art of writing, composing and/or performing a well thought-out music, whether vocal, instrumental or a combination of vocal and instrumental forces. It can be described as a philosophical expression using sonic materials, dance medium and other art forms. Art song, for instance, is a setting of a lofty or sublime quality text or lyrics to music by a trained composer intended for concert repertory. Such music includes a written accompaniment by the composer, different from an improvised accompaniment by the performer(s) of folk or popular music. Emerging from the folk art music and popular music, including palace art music usually performed in the courts of the traditional/paramount rulers, the modern art music may be said to be theorised under the umbrella of philosophy, culture, identity, classification, training, beauty and appropriateness.

As a matter of fact, the history of the evolution of Western musical art forms cannot be complete without mentions of *Ars Antiqua/Ars Vetus* (old art), the period of the French polyphony of the 13th century associated with the Notre Dame School in Paris, and *Ars Nova* (new art) of the 14th century. The new craft centered on conventions of notation and polyphonic songs, theory of durations and consonances of the time. Another historical dimension was the incredible creation of lyric poetry and collection of over 2,500 poems with

melodies by the medieval composer-poets, commonly called the Troubadours, who flourished in southern France in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Troubadours were known to be a mix of bourgeois, noblemen and commoners. Randle (1986,p. 877) noted that “Southern French court society, together with the troubadour lyric written for it, exerted an immense cultural, literary, and musical influence throughout medieval western Europe”. The counterparts of the troubadours were the Trouvers in the Northern France who created strophic and monophonic songs in French.

African art music in the contemporary period is known to have gone through stages of developmental metamorphosis bridled by Western educational policies, colonialistic imperialism, social influences, and Christian missionary activities. No doubt, the history of Yoruba art music cannot be divorced from its traditional/cultural sources in terms of the various historical processes which have affected the cultivation and development of the indigenous instruments, musical forms, songs categorization, performance styles and practices, and musical types influenced by references in historical narratives. This connection forms the basis for Africa’s true uniqueness, for in all of these, the key indices are originality, identity characterization and authenticity which are derivable from the norms of the indigenous musical culture. Looking at history and organization of Music in West Africa, Nketia (2005, p. 254) observes that:

It is illuminating to find, for example, references in the works of Barbot (1732) and Bosman (1705), on “the coast of Guinea” to drums being “generally in consort with the blowing of horns,” to men beating drums with “two long sticks made [in] harmer fashion and sometimes with a straight stick or their bare hands”, and the fact that when drumming “they always set a little boy to strike upon a hollow piece of iron with a piece of wood”.

However, one thing is apparent in structuring African art musical creativity in the contemporary period. There has to be some definable processes and techniques to be adopted

in creating African art music to justify aesthetic and creative virtues and qualities which are embedded in the African philosophy and culture.

Developing contemporary Yoruba Art Music, as indeed African Art Music, must search for indigenous idioms. This is because there is widespread consciousness among musicians, composers and music practitioners all over the world to reflect the local content of their environment in the music they create, produce and perform. Obviously, the freshness, identity, and uniqueness in character and expression will not only provide pleasing experiences, but also generate new impetus for musical creativity. Meki Nzewi, cited by Onyeji (2011, pp. 10-11) in addressing philosophy of African art music in the context of composition, states that:

Systematic understanding of the traditional compositional theory, complimented with judicious integration of other (European) modern music theory, should form the creative foundations for any modern African Art Music compositions for international appreciation which could sound authoritatively African (pp. 10-11).

Nzewi goes on, to orate that, “a composer of modern African music should enable a listener to appreciate the quintessential African harmonic, developmental and textural-structural idioms. Otherwise the composition is of no consequence to a continuum of African creative integrity” (1997, p. 72). It is this drive towards freshness and integrity that transformed the level of appreciation of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti’s popular music, much more than his anti-imperialistic philosophy. Omojola (2006, p. 81) reports:

It was during the era of ‘Africa 70’ that Fela made a dramatic re-entry into Nigerian music particularly when he released the album *Jeun Kooku*. It was a huge success and Fela became an instant household name in Nigeria. It represented the result of his extended research into African and African-American music. While retaining some elements of *jazz*, the new style relies on a greater use of traditional Yoruba music, notably, the employment of call-responsorial choral patterns, Yoruba-influenced melodic and harmonic procedures, the incorporation of traditional instruments such as the *gbedu*

[cylindrical drums], *agogo* (gong), *sekere* (bead rattles) and the employment of dancers. These are combined with European instruments such as the keyboard, guitars and brass.

In Nketia's discussion on "Modes of Inquiry and Interpretation", he corroborates this as he states that:

The search for new idioms of music or new ways of making music is one of the major preoccupations of our contemporary world of music, for whether it is Africa or Asia, Latin America or Europe, there seems to be widespread consciousness among musicians of our era that music must reflect the historical experience as well as the intellectual environment of those who make it (Nketia, 2005, p. 337).

Consequently, the music so created has to have the bonds of indigenous knowledge structures with trends of ideas and developments in the modern century musical creativity. Such is the making of new music, whether tonal or atonal, serial or electronic, eclectic or traditional, vocal or instrumental. Even revolutionary, explorative and experimental music have their foundations in the cultural phenomenon, marvel, potency, experience and prodigy. In this regard, trajectory of traditions in the indigenous knowledge scheme with Western musical knowledge opens up wide possibilities in the creation of music in the contemporary society.

In Nigeria, the equivalents of the *Troubadours* and *Trouvers* in France, and the *Meistersingers* and *Minnesingers* in Germany, are the court musicians, traditional and roving musicians who form ensembles to entertain the royalties and the public at various events and festivals. The legendary dance music troupes include *Atilogwu* music dance troupe and *Ijele* masquerade of the Igbo people, the *Ekpe* dance music of Umuagbai Ndoki, the *Owu* masquerade dance troupe, the *Periangala* of Okrika in the Niger Delta, the *Ange* and *Obadaru* dance troupes of Benue State, and the *Eyo* masquerade dance music of the Yorubas are some of the samples found in Nigeria. The *Argungu* festival of Kebbi would also provide avenues where similar indigenous/traditional ensembles would perform, demonstrating

shared musical idioms as well as the various cultural strands unique to each participating community and troupe. Okafor and Okafor (2009, p. 16) observe that “across Nigeria today, you could find many Igbo minstrels like Ozoemena Nsugbe and Morocco Maduka using the *Iya Ilu* or any other type of the Yoruba talking drum” for music performance. All these are precursors of the contemporary Nigerian art music as the art music is derived from, and is influenced by the Nigerian cultural idioms.

African music performance and audience philosophy as an area of inquiry generates several philosophical dissections and directions which support the perspective that African music is both culture and environment sensitive, reflecting and interpreting man and his environment (Nwankpa, 2013, pp. 30-31). Postulations of these philosophical strata include:

- a) Environment/culture and entity audience philosophy,
- b) Events-centered audience philosophy,
- c) Expression of human sentiments philosophy,
- d) Tonal idiom and communication sentimentality philosophy,
- e) Audience participation philosophy,
- f) Costume and stage philosophy,
- g) Referentialism philosophy,
- h) Intentionality audience philosophy,
- i) Audience appreciation philosophy,
- j) African time audience philosophy, and
- k) High volume of sound audience philosophy.

Yoruba Art Music Philosophical Dais

Art Music is dynamic, valiant and prosperous if it is secured to, and reflective of, socio-cultural gradients and knowledge based literature. The identity and style in a composition are dependent largely on the way and manner the composer uses such elements as melody, rhythm and metric designs, harmony, language and instrumentation in that composition.

Contemplating on the philosophy of compositional and structural paradigms in creativity, it is imperative that the mood that is painted and the overall structure of the music are a reflection of the subject matter, the objective of the creation, the socio-cultural implications and the very many factors influencing the composer and his/her environment (Nwankpa, 2014a, p. 10). Anchored on the philosophical dais of utilitarianism, the Yoruba Art Music can be said to be inseparably bound with life. Bode Omojola (2008, pp. 82-83) states that “the significance of music relies on an integral appreciation of music as a creative tool which mirrors, interprets, re-invents and prescribes human values within the specific contexts of its operational base”. He affirms that as a “creative tool, Yoruba music is conceived as an aesthetic entity designed to please as well as to entertain. As an utilitarian performance, the music is designed as a forum within which societal values are generated and negotiated”. As in many Nigerian/African cultures, Yoruba music, folk or art, carries the capacity, tool and deterrent through which the tyranny and excesses of authorities and individuals may be interrogated, challenged and curtailed.

The Yoruba music is premised on folklorism, poetry, songs and praise singing, chants and dances. Thus, Yoruba traditional music genres, as observed by Iwasokun (2008, p. 356), are:

- a) *Obatala* song (from Gbongan town),
- b) *Oro* and *Waka* songs (from Modakete town)
- c) *Ijigi* song (from Ondo town)
- d) *Edi* song (from Edun-abon)
- e) *Iwerende* song (from Iree town)
- f) *Adamo* song (from Ile-Ife and Ilesa)

Ruminating on the importance of Yoruba folklore and music, Iwasokun adds that *Àpàlà* music is meant to “teach morals, correct societal norms and propagate Yoruba culture in

[through] the drumming, dancing and singing systems” (2008, pp. 356-357). Associating the Yoruba concept of aesthetics with its traditional music, Daramola (2013, p. 116) asserts that the “Yoruba aesthetic theory is an all-encompassing one involving ethical, religious and emotive aspects as well as preferences based on personal taste. It is based on artistic and non-artistic elements which cannot be separated.” As a total art, Yoruba indigenous music demonstrates an integrative art culture involving aesthetics, social and philosophical values which the people hold dear. He views it as “encompassing not only sound as a physical phenomenon creating certain sensations within the human intellect, but also sound as one of the processes by which communication is achieved”. Paramount among these are the drums and the voice. The *Dundun* as a drum family is so important that there is hardly any cultural ceremony or entertainment without drumming in the music making of the Yoruba people.

In furtherance of the art music challenges and development in Nigeria, the following gradients are imperative:

- i. Software creation/development for music notation, documentation and publishing;
- ii. Instrument technological innovations and advancement centre;
- iii. Poetry/Lyrics and linguistic development and standardization;
- iv. Development of indigenous musical resources, scales, modes, folk-tunes, harmonic structures, rhythmic organization;
- v. Development of Strategies for Music Education, training and research;
- vi. Documentation, marketing, economic development, and royalty;
- vii. Industry promotion, business organization, and entrepreneurial development,
- viii. Enhanced harmonized performance practices and code of conduct.

Therefore, the Yoruba philosophical basis of art music must be streamed on indigenous knowledge of the people’s culture, mental emancipation and innovativeness, and refinement

of methodical approaches in education and creativity. In support of Meki Nzewi's pioneering efforts in Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS), Adedeji (2011, p. 50) concurs that "teaching music with the method of indigenous knowledge system is all-encompassing, as far as African culture is concerned. It subsumes the first two methods and includes the use of African life experiences and technology for illustration." The two methods mentioned, according to Adedeji, are the musical arts approach and creativity method. In his submission he states that the musical arts approach is "a method that is based on an African indigenous belief and practice of music which rejects the teaching or learning of music in isolation but rather recognizes and carries along the music related arts [which include] drama, dance, folklores and visual arts". In terms of creativity method, he informs that this method "is based on the creative theory similar to Akin Euba's 'creative musicology' and Vidal's 'pragmatic approach'." He adds that the creativity method is practical and activity based. "It demonstrates to the learner and tasks him or her to create and recreate, or to use Nzewi's words, 'composition and re-composition', using African musical techniques of improvisation, extemporization, creative repetition, imitation, variation, and parody". Adedeji complements that "this method differs from other activity based methods in its employment of indigenous African models and structures" (Adedeji, 2011).

In corroboration with the philosophical dais, and in consonant with musical creativity and contemporary expressionism, it is meet and right to interlace the musical ideation with the indigenous knowledge system since musical creativity enhances our understanding of our culture and knowledge system of our worldview. It is imperative to state that identity; originality and authenticity in musical creativity are not hindered, but encouraged, by emergence of new ideas intellectualized from our traditional music and historical experiences (Nwankpa, 2014, p. 4-5).

YAM Progenitors

The Yoruba Art Music can be assumed to have had a long history of progenitors having been influenced by three major streams in its development. The first stream is made up of the missionaries who came with their religion and education through Badagry, Lagos, Calabar and Port Harcourt led by the Methodist Church who was the first to arrive on September 24, 1842. The Anglican Church arrived in Nigeria on December 19, 1842. The second stream heralds the emancipation from the shackles of slavery and slave trade as the freed slaves returned to Nigeria. The third stream concerns itself with colonialism, including Western music, educational paradigm, philosophies and socio-political hegemony of the colonial masters. One may add the fourth stream as the influences of the servicemen who came/returned to the coast of Nigeria following the end of the world wars.

Some of the YAM progenitors were T.K.T. Phillips, and world renowned Fela Sowande (whose *Steal Away*, *African Suite for Strings*, *Folk Symphony*, and others, are as creatively engaging as they are entertaining. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC, is always agog playing Sowande's music. It is important to note that the CBC not only plays Sowande's music as part of its classical music menu and requests, but also as signature tune for its programmes). Others include Ayo Bankole (known to have written in the stylistics of the Yoruba language), Akin Euba and Ransome Kuti. Mention should also be made of Richard Bucknor (organist and pianist) who would play anything in front of him, and Edward Lukula who introduced me to Yoruba art music with *Olusegun, Ajasegun!*, in the 1970s. Adegbite (2001, p. 78) provides the following information on Nigerian pioneer musicians before the advent of Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Olaolu Omideyi and Akin Euba:

Robert A. Coker, one of the products of mission schools was said to be the first to study Music in Germany as far back as 1871... Forty years later that is, 1911, another Nigeria, T.K.E. Phillips went to Trinity College of Music

[London] and returned to Nigeria in 1914. He was the first Nigerian to study music in England.

The above information is corroborated by a research conducted by Professor Tunji Vidal which reveals that Robert Arugbamolu Coker was the first Nigerian to study music abroad. However, the forebears have produced fascinating Yoruba scholars and composers, including Akin Euba, Ayo Bankole, Bode Omojola, Ayo Omotola, Femi Faseun and Stephen Olusoji, to mention a few. Below are some composers of Yoruba Art Music and their works:

S/No.	Names	Example of Works
1	Robert Arugbamola Coker	
2	Fela Sowande	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Folk Symphony ii. <i>African Suite for Strings</i> iii. <i>Steal Away</i> (arrangement) iv. <i>IseOluwa</i>, for Orchestra v. <i>Kámorokoso</i>, for Organ vi. <i>Come out and dance</i> (Based on Yoruba folksong) vii. <i>An Evening Procession on the Coast</i>, for Orchestra viii. <i>African Dances</i>, for Orchestra ix. <i>Yoruba Lullaby</i>, for Piano x. <i>Bury me Eas or Wes</i>, for Organ (based on Black Spiritual from the sacred idioms of the Negro) xi. <i>African Vespers</i>, for orchestra xii. <i>Oh Motherland</i>, for Orchestra xiii. <i>Oyigiyiii: Introduction, theme and variations on Yoruba folk theme</i>, for Organ xiv. <i>2 Preludes on Yoruba sacred melodies</i>, for Organ xv. <i>4 Sketches</i>, for Orchestra
3.	T.K.E. Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Magnificat</i> (a setting in Yoruba), a choral suite for the Republic of Nigeria. ii. "Samuel" (Cantata), Versicles and Responses in Yoruba. iii. <i>Emi Ogbe Oju mi Soke</i>, for full choir, baritone solo and Organ accompaniment.
4.	Ayo Bankole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Christmas Oratorio</i> ii. <i>Requiem for Orchestra and Chorus</i>. iii. Canatata "Jonah" iv. <i>Night of Miracles</i>, an Opera v. <i>Sonata No.4</i> vi. <i>Winter Birds</i> vii. <i>Toccata and Fugue for Organ</i>
5.	Akin Euba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Opera Chaka</i> ii. <i>Towards an African Pianism: Collected Works for the Keyboard</i>

		<p>iii. <i>A Yoruba Folksong for Flute, Harp, Viola and Percussion</i></p> <p>iv. <i>Alatangana</i>, Ballet for Singers, Dancers and Nigerian instruments</p> <p>v. <i>Below Rusumo Falls</i>, for Voice, Dancer, Kaygum, Flute and Piano</p> <p>vi. <i>Black Bethlehem</i>, for Soloists, Chorus, Nigerian drums and Jazz Ensemble</p> <p>vii. <i>Festac 77 Anthem</i>, for Chorus and Jazz Ensemble</p> <p>viii. <i>Legend of Olurombi</i>, for orchestra</p> <p>ix. <i>Impressions from Akwete Cloth</i>, for Piano</p> <p>x. <i>Ice Cubes</i>, for String Orchestra</p> <p>xi. <i>Dance to the Rising Sun</i>, for orchestra</p>
6.	Bode Omojola	<p>A. <i>Three Yoruba Sacred Choral Works</i></p> <p>i. Leave Us Not, Holy Lord</p> <p>ii. Baba OlorunWa</p> <p>iii. OnaKan</p> <p>B. <i>Studies In African Pianism</i></p> <p>i. Scenes from Yoruba Moonlight</p> <p>ii. Two Nigerian Dances</p> <p>iii. Ilesanmi</p> <p>iv. Agdimmo Dance No.I</p> <p>v. Agidimo Dance No.II</p> <p>vi. Prayer</p>
7.	Tunji Vidal	<i>Musika Afrikana</i> for Piano
8.	Stephen Olusoji	<p><i>Nigerian Dances for Piano, Volume 1</i></p> <p>i. Apala</p> <p>ii. Waka</p> <p>iii. Sakara</p> <p>iv. Fuji</p> <p>v. Highlife</p> <p>vi. Afrobeat</p> <p>vii. Ikwokirikwo</p> <p>viii. Atilogwu</p> <p><i>Melorhythmic Pieces for Musical Instruments</i> (Orchestral Works), Volume 1 (with CD recording)</p>
9.	Atinuke Adenike Idamoyibo	<p>A. <i>Music in Its Absolute Purity (A Collection of Piano Works)</i>.</p> <p>B. <i>Music and the Envisioned Destiny (A Collection of Piano Works)</i></p> <p>i. Ni Igba Iwase (Nos. 1, 2 and 3)</p> <p>ii. The Silence of Oyo Mesi (Nos. 1 and 2)</p> <p>iii. Other Pieces</p> <p>C. <i>Music in Its Essential Realities</i>, for orchestra</p>

Musical Structures

Although Yoruba music is known to be structurally solo and responsorial-chorus format, the modern art musicians have added higher standard of artistry and innovativeness. Art music in Nigeria had evolved through hymnal structures as well as the various chants and English anthems associated with Christian worships and related events. However, changes started to emerge in the need, course, challenges and resultant effects of translations into indigenous/native languages. This reality apparently gave birth to the type of indigenous art music commonly called the native airs. Thus, the Yorubas, Igbos, Efiks, Ogonis, Kalabaris, and other ethnic groupings developed their native airs and indigenous art musical styles based on their cultural idioms.

Permit me to briefly mention only three of the contemporary Yoruba culture-influenced composers and their works. The pieces in *Three Yoruba Sacred Choral Works* composed by Bode Omojola are of special interest. Apart from making a good addition to the art music creation in Nigeria, this collection of three original compositions (*Leave Us Not, Holy Lord!*, *Baba Olorun Wa*, and *Ona Kan*) are entirely in Yoruba. Nwankpa (2013, p. 157) observes that they reflect textual contour and nuances of the Yoruba language and culture. *Baba mimo ma fiwa sile o!* (*Leave Us Not, Holy Lord!*) is a very contemplative and prayerful piece. Below is an excerpt from *Baba mimo ma fiwa sile o!* (*Leave Us Not, Holy Lord!*), a Yoruba art choral music of Omojola:

Baba mimo ma fiwa sile o! (Leave Us Not, Holy Lord!).

LEAVE US NOT, HOLY LORD!

[For Mount Olives Chapel, Ilorin]

Bode Omojola

Solemn, but not too slow

SOPRANO
mp Ba-ba Mi-mo ma fi-wa-si-le o. O-ba to-to ma fi-wa si-le o. *mf* I-wo

ALTO
mp Ba-ba Mi-mo ma fi-wa si-le o. O-ba to-to ma fi-wa si-le o. *mf* I-wo

TENOR
mp Ba-ba Mi-mo ma fi-wa si-le o. O-ba to-to ma fi-wa si-le o. *mf* I-wo

BASS
mp Ba-ba Mi-mo ma fi-wa si-le o. O-ba to-to ma fi-wa si-le o. *mf* I-wo

Piano
mp *mf*

5
f lo ni - pe-ka ma a sin o a be o ye O-lo-run ma ma je ka ri ya. I-wo lo ni pe ka ma mi-kan

f lo-ni pe k'a sin o be o ye O-lo-run ma ma je ka ri 'ya lo ni Ye

f lo-ni - pe-ka - sin o be o ye O-lo-run ma ma je ka ri 'ya lo ni pe k'a ma mi 'kan

f lo-ni - pe-ka - sin o be o ye O-lo-run Ba - ba Ba - ba jo - wo Ba -

Copyright: Bode Omojola

2

10 *mp*
 o a be o ye O-lo-run ma ma je ka r'i-ya. I-wo lo-ni pe ka ma mi kan o.
mp
 o be o-ye O-lo-run ma ma je ka ri ya lo - ni Ye Ba - ba wa
mp
 o be o-ye O-lo-run ma ma je ka ri 'ya lo ni pe ka ma m'i-kan Ba - ba wa
mp
 ba be o-ye O-lo-run Ba - ba Ba - ba jo - wo Ba - ba

In Omojola's *Studies In African Pianism* (2003), "Scenes from Yoruba Moonlight" (383 measures), for instance, strikes an interesting reflection and reminiscence into the Yoruba folk song culture with *Dundun* talking drum accompaniment. It is an easy listenable atonal music demonstrating interplay of rhythmic polyphony and Yoruba folklorism. Without going into any analytical crucibles, this piece can be viewed in the design of themes and variations, bellowing the **A-B-C-A1-B1** structural format. Section **A** is in metrical design of 4/4 (measures 1-40); section **B** (6/8) runs from measures 41 to 138; section **C** (4/4) is from measures 139 to 189; while section **A1** (4/4) consists of measures 190 to 219. Measures 220 to 383 may be considered as an extension of **B** section with other emerging variants as follows: **B1** (12/8, measures 220-277), **B2** (6/8, measures 278-345), and **B3** (12/8, measures 346-383). The opening theme is found in measures 1 and 2:



Scenes From Yoruba Moonlight

Bode Omojola

Allegro Moderato

This block contains the second, third, and fourth systems of the musical score. The second system continues the piece with the same notation as the first system, marked *mp*. The third system begins at measure 5, indicated by a '5' above the first staff. The fourth system begins at measure 9, indicated by a '9' above the first staff. The notation remains consistent with the previous systems, featuring a melodic line in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass.

Stephen Olusoji is a budding composer whose collection of *Nigerian Dances for Piano* provides a new impetus to the utility of local musical resources and idioms. Olusoji is joining our Nigerian art music progenitors of Yoruba descent in creating and recreating our folk and indigenous music in different platforms and media to enhance musical education and preservation. His efforts are similar to the Hungarian composers, Zoltan Kodaly and Bela Bartok, who developed strong affinity to the Hungarian folk songs, and the Russian “Five” (Mili Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, Cesar Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov) who exploited the Russian folklore and Slavic culture in their musical creativity.

Reading Benson Idonije's tribute to Ayinla Omowura and his comments on *Àpàlà* music triggered a nostalgic feeling over enormous potentials and resources arising from Nigeria's indigenous idioms. Idonije (2007, p. 35) states: "One indigenous social music type which needs exploitation for contemporary appeal is *Àpàlà*, a music genre whose rhythms continue to be acclaimed all over the world, especially by Jazz musicians as creatively energetic, intricate, propulsive and truly African." It is little wonder that Haruna Ishola Bello (1919-1983), MON, a native of Ijebu-Igbo in Ogun State, topped the list of *Àpàlà* musicians in Yorubaland as exemplified in Olusoji's *Nigerian Dances for Piano* (Olusoji, 2010). As reflected in his description of the style of *Àpàlà* music, Olusoji informs us that *Àpàlà* music is recitative with solo-responsorial antiphonal passages. It contains highly percussive and energetic rhythms and polyrhythms. The texts are of highly philosophical basis laced with proverbs and words of wisdom. The instrumental accompaniment is made up of *Agidigbo* (resonating box thumb piano), *Igba* (calabash), *Akuba* (drums), *Bembe* (drums), *Sekere* (rattles), *Agogo* (bells) and so on. As a matter of fact, Benson Idonije is a musical icon. He is a revered Music Journalist and Broadcaster acclaimed to be the foremost in Nigeria. He is also a Fellow of Adam Fiberesima School of Music and Conservatory, University of Port Harcourt.

A cursory analysis of the *Àpàlà* piano score is quite intriguing. First, I would like to recommend a modification on the title to read—*Ina Ran: an Àpàlà Music for Piano*. ("Ina Ran!" in Yoruba language means fire has spread!) This title seems more appropriate since *Àpàlà* is a genre. Furthermore, and according to the note, the piano music is derived from the "Ina Ran" motif (see the bass line of the last beat of measure 2 to measure 6), thereby diminishing the rationale for assigning the title as *Àpàlà*. Nonetheless, this piece has a lot of secundal harmonic structures laced with quartal/quintal blocks. On superficial inspection and with the elements of modal melodies and complex sonorities there from, it is possible to

adduce mixed-intervallic structures. By nature, mixed-interval chords combine two or more of series of 2nds, 3rds, or 4ths with their inversions and compounds to form more complex sonorities (Kostka, 1999, p. 63). Apart from measures 21 to 22 which exhibit ‘A’ minor chord, and in spite of the “key shifts” and sectional alignments, the composer ingeniously avoided the mediant throughout the piece.

Here is an extract from the piano score of *Àpàlà*:

Apala
To: Sewa Bakare & Margaret Olusoji

Olusoji Stephen
July 5, 2002

With Steady Beat

6
10

Brilliantly
ff

Marc. il. Basso

It is not often that one finds women composers in the academia, especially in Nigeria. While the likes of Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe and Rev. (Sr) Prof. CordisMarie Achikeh (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka), Dr. Ngozi Okonkwo (Nwafor Orizu Federal College of Education, Nsugbe), and Dr. Patience Oguoma (AlvanIkoku College of Education, Owerri), are found in the Eastern Nigeria, little is known of women composers from Western Nigeria.

However, there is a composer-pianist who has done some significant work in music composition. She is Dr. (Mrs.) Atinuke Adenike Idamoyibo. Her works include *Music in its Absolute Purity* (2013), *Music and the Envisioned Destiny: A Collection of Piano Works* (2014), and *Music in Its Essential Realities*, for orchestra (2016). Programmatic in construction, the pieces reflect their titles. Idamoyibo is a tonal composer with simple tonal harmonic designs. She is interested in stimulating expanded creative bandwidth of African style in piano repertory. The composer posits that “every work in display is a characteristic example of different musical ideas, revealing vividly the thought and the enthusiastic usage of the rhythm of the gong and the instruments of the *dundun* ensemble to create these works” (see the back cover of *Music and the Envisioned Destiny: A Collection of Piano Works*). Her “Ni Igba Iwase” No 1 (The Dawn of Creation) from *Music and the Envisioned Destiny*, is a reflection of these Nigerian (Yoruba) folk idioms in a flowing cantabile, structured in repeated rhythmically non-challenging sections in key F major.

Below is “Ni Igba Iwase” No 1 (The Dawn of Creation) from *Music and the Envisioned Destiny*:

Ni Igba Iwase No. 1

Atinuke Idamoyibo

Cantabile ♩ = 120

f

5

Many Nigerians have watched and/or experimented with keen interest the ideation of “African Pianism”. Such concept provides new theorization, experimentation and direction for creativity and innovation in African keyboard music. Omojola posits that “African pianism is an epitome of new African art music and one of its advantages is that it affords us a good view of the art music through one of its most characteristic forms” (2003, p. ii). While cultures may adopt certain instruments and rebrand them with new names, these instruments so adopted, “often lead to new usages and idioms in the new cultures” (Omojola, 2003, p. ii). Certainly, nothing aberrational will happen if the piano becomes fully integrated into African cultures and usage. However, would one claim “ownership” of an instrument simply because the instrument lends itself to both the style of writing/expression and the medium of performance? Perhaps, it may be advisable, for instance, to encourage research and composition into the creation of an orchestra of African talking drums which could be branded “African Dundumism”. Or, should that be labelled “European Dundumism” or “Western Dundumism”? We could extend the African theorising to “African Diatonicism”, “African Harmonicism”, “African Rhythmicism”, “African Compositionism”, “African Performativism”, and so on.

New Adaptations

Yoruba art music has evolved through the following adaptations:

- a. Parody: Religious or social, sacred or secular
- b. New media, instruments and technology
- c. Art musical creativity
- d. “Western” Education
- e. Civilization and modernity

f. “Foreign” and “Domestic” influences

YAM: Way forward

It may be pertinent to look at the way forward in terms of positioning art music in the Yorubaland in two dimensions—vision and objective.

1. Vision: Someone once said that vision is a sense of direction towards a destination. Then one may ask, what is the vision of the Yoruba Art Music festival? Let us proffer that to develop Yoruba art music (choral and instrumental) to world class, using Yoruba indigenous resources, the following resources need to be explored. These are:

- a) Folklore
- b) Poetry
- c) Melody/theme
- d) Scale
- e) Rhythm
- f) Texture and density
- g) Harmony and indigenous harmonic progressions—parallel 3rds, 6ths, 2nds, and clusters
- h) Tonal and atonal musical designs
- i) Local instruments and instrumentation
- j) Establishment of unique indigenous orchestra
- k) Symbolic and idiomatic expressions locale to the people
- l) Sacred and secular texts and idioms

2. Objective: The following objectives are suggested:

- a) To provide educational materials and resources for the development and enhancement of music education at all levels;
- b) To provide repertoire to serve various musical, entertainment, aesthetic, and therapeutic needs in the society. Repertoire documentation is also important. Nwankpa (2013, p. 154) opines that although different groups may know the characteristics of music-dance programmes of other cultures based on their oral traditions and practices, “it is needful to have repertoire documentation for easy reference for both the members and non-members of the culture. It is also needful to have repertoire documentation for research/reference purposes”.
- c) To preserve and promote the culture and cultural heritage of the Yoruba people and their identity.
- d) To promote Yoruba-Nigerian classical music realism.
- e) To endow professorial chairs in Yoruba music and research. According to the University of Port Harcourt’s *Administrative Policy and General Guidelines on Centres, Institutes and Endowed Chairs*, “Universities establish endowed professorial chairs to attract and retain outstanding academic staff who have distinguished themselves through their research and scholarly/creative activity”, adding that “these positions are among the highest and most prestigious appointments at any institution and are reserved for the most distinguished scholars and leaders”. I urge especially the first and second generation universities in the South-Western Nigeria to establish endowed chairs to promote and enhance musical creativity, research and innovation in recognition of the outstanding contributions of such musical giants as Fela Sowande, Robert Arugbamola Coker, Akin Euba, T.K.E. Phillips and Ayo Bankole.

Currently, the University of Port Harcourt is the only known institution of higher learning to have established endowed Professorial Chairs in Music. There are 3 endowed professorial chairs:

- i. The Ikoli Harcourt Whyte Professorial Chair in Sacred Music, established in April, 2012. This Professorial Chair is occupied by Sir Rev. Dr. Achinivu Kanu Achinivu.
- ii. The Cardinal Rex Jim Lawson Professorial Chair in Music, established in December, 2012. The Chair Occupant is Sir Prof. Onyee N. Nwankpa.
- iii. The Sir Clement Fimie Nimenibo Professorial Chair in Music and Research. An occupant is yet to be appointed.

Where are the art ambassadors, philanthropists, educators, innovators and prominent people of Yorubaland? The University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, University of Lagos, and University of Ilorin should take note. Absence of endowed chairs in Music at these institutions tends to convey feelings of reproach to the revered discipline of Music. Or, are we trying to discredit those who have toiled assiduously to put Yoruba Music, indeed Yoruba art music and culture, on World musical landscape?

CONCLUSION

“Yoruba Art Music: Fronting The Progenitors” has briefly looked at art music in the context of the Yoruba philosophical dais, the YAM progenitors, and new adaptations and concluded with visionary objectives. While the YAM festival exposes a great potential of musical knowledge through interdisciplinary study, the use of praise poetry of the Kings to compose for schools, ensembles and other organizations can help in solving the problems of semantics in translation from English to the local language. Research teams can be set up to be

responsible for musical historiography and recordings of Yoruba and other Nigerian music. Through the Ministries of Education, and Culture and National Orientation, the Federal Government can build a classic museum of Nigerian Music and musical instruments. In the Canadian city of Calgary, for instance, the 9th floor of the McKimmie Library at the University of Calgary houses the Canadian Music Centre, where recordings, scores and publications on Canadian music are domiciled. Perhaps, this level of project is best pursued by the parent body, the Association of Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM). ANIM is capable of sourcing for funding from the Federal Government with a well-packaged proposal. On the dearth of art music collection, supervisors, especially at the graduate level, should direct their students to research on the works of our senior scholars to keep recordings of their achievements and creative activities for posterity. A research team should also be set up and be mandated to write books on art music of diverse genres and media for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, and for other art organizations and agencies. YAM organizers should also invest on social engineering to stimulate and encourage establishment and endowment of professorial chairs in various areas in music. The Oba (Kings) as custodian of culture should also show interest in this festival, moreover, since these Oba also make music use as part of their daily activities (Okunade, 2010). Finally, the YAM festival may run annually or biennially to ensure sustainability, and effective assessment and monitoring.

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