

PERFORMANCE AESTHETICS AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF MUSIC IN THE BOLORUNDURO FULANI MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Olapeju Shadiat Shuaib

&

Adedoyin Abimbola Popoola

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Abstract

Marriage ceremonies in most societies in Nigeria are cultural and social events subsumed in performance arts such as drama, dance, music, costume, and make-up amongst others that are used in establishing the essence and purpose of the conjugal events in a colourful, exhilarating and functional mode. To this extent, this paper examines the performance aesthetics and structural composition of music in Fulani Bolorunduro marriage ceremonies in southern part of Ilorin, Kwara state in order to showcase their cultural and social functions within the ceremony. This paper adopts descriptive and analytical research methods and participant observation with interview tools to gather our data. It discovered that the Fulani Bolorunduro weddings are held once in a year in form of a mass wedding and that Islam as the main religion of the Bolorunduro people has influenced their traditional marriage institution. It is also revealed that despite the acculturation influence of Islam, the traditional practice and cultural identity of the people are still highlighted in the ceremony through performance aesthetics replete in dramatic actions, dance, music, costume, makeup and properties which entrenches cultural rejuvenation, communal interaction, unity, and socialization in the community. This brings to the fore the dire need to analyse the musical features such as Tonal arrangement, Melodic contours, Harmonic constituents and Key and Time signatures used in the marriage ceremonies. The paper therefore recommends that the performance aesthetics in the marriage ceremony under study,

should be encouraged, preserved, and explored for promotion of the rich cultural heritage of the Nigerian people.

Keywords: Bolorunduro Marriage, Music, Culture, Structure, Performance, Aesthetics

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a universal matrimonial institution that is culturally bound and oriented. In this wise, its operation is determined by different societies across the world because the conjugal union of man and woman or otherwise is characterised with varied rites, laws, customs and traditions governing its structure, organisation and practice. Interestingly, most marriage ceremonies are performative in both content and form. In most African communities, marriage celebration are communal and social events accompanied with singing, dancing and drumming. Thus, the theatrical components in them cannot be under-emphasised because as a theatrical production it tells a story in a variety of ways. Sometimes the story is delivered through dialogue and songs between characters and at other times, the plot of the performance is conveyed through the actions of characters and other elements of character definition such as costumes, makeup and property that form the visual narrative of a performance (Brunch, 1990 p.1).

The statement above affirms the notion that for marriage ceremonies to be effectual, all the aspects of theatrical production must be well-coordinated. Omoera (2013, p.34) equally expounds that the crux of the performance is subsumed in artistic presentations such as music, dance, drama, recital, storytelling, and technical aesthetics which add value and meaning to the overall aesthetics of a performance. This postulation points to the understanding that, every social engagement of which marriage is part of, is subsumed in great artistry that is expressed through performing arts. Music as one of the high points of theatrical engagements is thus very important in marriages being one of the cultural indicators that instigate varying preferences among

different people in human society according to age, background, social status, religion, ethical values and so on. To this end, a deeper examination of music in this study is very crucial given its “cultural elements which afford valuable information into the rites of music practices, habits, and conventional lifestyle of a defined people” (Levinson, 1987, p.43). Against this backdrop, the study examines the performance aesthetics and structural analysis of music in Fulani wedding ceremonies of Bolorunduro community in Ilorin south local government of Kwara State. In lieu of the double dimension of this paper, a synergy of descriptive and analytic methods are employed to interrogate the sociological and musicological disposition of the ceremony. The ethnographic description is used to study the marriage culture of Bolorunduro fulani while the analytical theory is applied to highlight and articulate the performance aesthetics and musical features highlighted in the study during field work and performance of the marriage ceremony.

BOLORUNDURO MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The Bolorunduro community comprise of mainly the fulani settlers that migrated from Sokoto to Ilorin due to their nomadic nature of cattle rearing before they settled in their present location in the interior of Ilorin along Tanke Bubu axis of the Southern part of the town. This community has been in existence for the past twenty five years and the statistics of the dwellers is estimated to be about 4,675. Islamic religion is their accepted religion and it has influenced every facet of their lives ranging from religion to their marriage. More than the union of man and wife, the mass marriage ceremonies of Bolorunduro community is a rite of passage; validating the transition from the bachelors and bachelorettes position to that of married couples and potential parents. It is a very essential feature as the absence of necessary human and material resources needed for the mass wedding can lead to the postponement to a future date, and possibly the next year. This

enunciates the premium importance placed culturally on the concept of marriage. The importance conferred on the marriage institution is also exemplified in the manner in which the potential couples are treated prior to the solemnisation proper. The couples to be who are usually in their mid or late teen's especially for the girls, and there are several instances where the girl child is married off to a much older groom.

In the marriage ceremonies of Bolorunduro community, it is important to note that the marriage proceedings transcends just one day. As a matter of fact, the whole process extends to one week before the celebration of Eid El Kabir festival. Another peculiarity of the Bolorunduro marriage ceremonies is that there is no definite time for the ceremony. This is dependent on a lot of factors; the most significant being that the couple usually run away during the wedding proceedings according to the marriage tradition and may take long a time before coming back. The marriages can sometimes even be before the bride was given birth to by both parents; the children are usually betrothed to one another by the family heads. Also this is very possible as the Fulani are in the habit of marrying among cousins, as this is intended to preserve the family bloodline, royalty, and traits. Although, there is a point of divergence in the Bolorunduro marriage ceremonies when compared to the main Fulani nuptial process, the contrast is embedded in the concept of *Sharo*: which is the traditional caning of the groom as proof he can carter for and protect the bride. Among the Fulani of Bolorunduro community, the conventional caning of the groom is not practiced. When the resource person (Fatimoh Yusuf in personal interview on 25th July 2019) was asked the reason for this, she simply replied that it was an outdated practice that the residents of the community have chosen to ignore. In the light of this, the nuptial process in Bolorunduro community only involves two processes; the *Introduction* and the *Solemnization*, as against the three nuptial processes in the core Fulani community.

PERFORMANCE AESTHETICS IN FULANI BOLORUNDURO MARRIAGE CEREMONY

A couple of Performance aesthetics ranging from artistic to technical components that add value, meaning and colour to the nuptial ceremony of Bolorunduro community are espoused in this paper. This is because the concept of performance is the bedrock of indigenous theatre practice that not only makes the marriage ceremony enjoyable to participants but also communicates pertinent information about the marriage to the audience. (Nader, 2011, p.211). Shuaib (2005, p.49) further opines that, “in traditional performances, indigenous actors, costumes, make-up, songs, mimes, folktales and dances have become the major highpoints of communication of cultural practices to the spectators”. To this end, this paper espouses the theatrical elements such as dance, drama, music, space, properties and costumes and makeup, among others in the highlighted marriage ceremony as performance aesthetics.

Drama

This is visible in a couple of dramatic actions in the nuptial process. A lot of these are seen in the introduction and solemnisation of the marriage. The introduction of the couple is characterised with dramatic actions embedded in dialogue and plot structure from the two family heads representing the couple who are the major characters of the ceremony, they convey the message of the occasion to the audience dramatically through the symbolic payment of dowry etc. According to (Usman Mohammed in a personal interview June 9, 2019), this is to pay homage to the elders and more importantly family heads, as well as to place value and credence on the marriage institution the couple to be are about to enter into.

After the introduction, the solemnisation of their marriage is the high point and climax of the marriage performance. Prayers centred on blissful marriage and numerous blessings are bestowed on them in a dramatic manner. Another notable action in the plot

structure of the event is the ironic transfer of gender roles when compared to most tribes. This is seen during the marriage ceremonies, the male folks are entrusted with the responsibility of serving the meals, while the females are engaged with the singing and dancing culminating into great entertainment and entrenchment of their cultural values. The grand finale during the exit of the bride to her husband's house equally instigates the end of the dramatic action. At this point, the bride is given a grand welcome by women especially those who dance around her and shower her with praises, as well as advises at some point. The whole process as established above usually spans seven days. This sums up, Goothberg (2018, p.1) et al submission that a " drama text can be understood in terms of layers of cultural meanings which include historical time period, literary convention, lexical issues, characters and its central themes".

Stage

Unlike the modern practice of having wedding services and reception in enclosed environments, the Fulani marriage ceremony in Bolorunduro community is usually held in the open air space, which serves as the staging area for the performance. The sitting arrangement is in a circular form - which can be likened to *theatre in the round*. The arrangement allows for maximum participation, response, and reaction required from the audience which makes communication process very easy and effectual in the conjugal ceremony. To this arrangement, Goothberg et al(2018, p.1) asserts that " a stage text can be understood in terms of audio-spatial properties", that is, how scenes are presented through the actions of stage characters and the object on stage.



Gathering of men and women for the nuptial proceedings in a circular formation during the wedding. Source: The Researchers on the 7th of September, 2018

Property (Props)

These are objects used by the characters within the ceremony to create the right ambience for the nuptial performance. Eedle (2019 p.1) equally adds that “any object held or used on stage in furthering of plot/story line of theatrical production is property”. For instance, the totemic icons of the dowry of cows, money, kolanuts and calabashes with native fresh milk are placed at the center of the gathering as cardinal for prayers and communication of the marriage tradition. In each of the cover of the calabashes are kolanuts and millets representing the number of members of the audience, as well as a symbol of peace and hospitality. Also symbolic is the fact that regardless of age, social ranking, and pedigree; the audiences are each required to help themselves to these items. Usually, the conventional meal for the celebration is *Tuwo Chinkafa*, which is specially made food from rice and served with stew. Although the women are charged with the responsibility of cooking the meal just as their everyday practice, but the men on the other hand do the job of serving the meal.



Some symbolic properties such as millet and kolanut placed on a tray covering the native milk in a calabash. Source: The Researchers on the 7th of September, 2018

Costume

The Costumes used for the marriage are grand and exotic assemblage of garments, jewelries and accessories rooted in the Fulani and Islamic culture, validating Ezeajugh(2010, p.130) assertion that “ costumes are items of clothing, accessories and ornamentation worn by actors for the purpose of defining their characters”. Thus, beautiful Fulani ceremonial attires void of western garments are usually engaged in the nuptial process with blend of Arabian veil to add colour and spectacular grandeur to the occasion. Judging from firsthand experience in this event, the issue of traditional clothing is held in high esteem, not only by the couples and families involved, but by all and sundry. To that extent, they are found in varied beautiful accoutrements. As a matter of fact, these occasions on the sidelines are avenues for the youths and the elderly to showcase their most recent fashion acquisition in a resplendent manner.

Make-up

This is an essential aesthetics factor in the marriage ceremony. The most significant make-up material is laali also known as Henna in

some cultures. It is a make-up procedure characterised by colourful tattoo painting intricately and extensively designed on the hand and



feet of the bride and her friends, a night before her wedding as part of the marriage rites to usher in love, fertility and prosperity into the marriage. Significantly, the aesthetic effect of the beautiful pigmented designs is more noticeable on the day of the marriage ceremony because it beautifies and personifies the bride amidst her costumes and makes her stand out as the celebrant which invariably adds meaning, value, and glamour to the marriage ceremony and the mood of the day. This explains why Ani and Ayaoha (2012, p.565) describe make-up as “non verbal means of communicating, constructing, revising, generating and maintaining symbolic and connotative messages that are vital for self identity”.

Dance

This is one theatrical element that features intermittently in the marriage performance, particularly at the beginning. It is a viable way of rejoicing, appreciating, and entertaining the well-wishers and friends. The dance taxonomies are composed of rhythms and movements which are characterised by fast paced and solemn movements in a synchronized floor pattern peculiar to the marriage tradition. Emoruwa (2005, p.21) opines that generally “dancing entails physical involvements”. The dance in the marriage

ceremony is not limited to the couple alone, family members and well wishers also partake in the dance experience thereby adding to the dexterity and beauty of the marriage ceremony.

Music

This comes very handy and is often accompanied by traditional musical instruments (the Fuwadu), which is devoid of technological affinity such as modern electrophone instruments regardless of the metropolitan setting of the community. Omojola (1995, p.79) avers that “music is one of the theatrical features that bridges the communication gap between the program anchors and the audience”. At various points songs which are usually in the *call and response* form are raised by designated people and chorused by the audience. That way, people do not just get to be part of the songs, but ultimately the marriage process.



One of the Researchers, playing Fuwadu with the women in the community.

Source: The Researchers on the 7th of June, 2018

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF MUSIC IN BOLORUNDURO MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

This segment deals with structural and musicological analysis of some selected songs recorded during the field-work of this paper in the light of form, structure, and arrangements, as the researchers transcribed and notated these songs for clearer and detailed musicological analysis. The structural analysis is used to study the transcription and also the notation of the songs. These analyses are geared towards helping us understand the various musical components and their structural formation (Ingold 2014, 383-385). Ikibe (2014, p. 112) noted that music analysis is;

The detailed examination of a piece of music with the intent of identifying the various components of the music, pointing out such areas as intervallic tonal arrangement, frequency occurrence of rhythmic notes, chord placements, melodic contour, and some other details about the music.

The songs employed by the Bolorunduro fulanis are composed of vivid African music features and characteristics. Some of these include, scale(s) , rhythm, form and texture of their music.

Scale System

Bolorunduro Fulani marriage music is conventionally hinged on the pentatonic scale, which is comprised of five (5) tones as opposed to the seven (7) tones in a western inclined diatonic scale. In the selected songs gathered during the field work, the choice of the tones that constitutes the five tones are **doh ray mee soh lah** which omits the subdominant (fah). However, the leading note (tee) of the diatonic scale in line with the tonal technicalities of the song is obvious.

VOCAL FORM OF BOLORUNDURO MUSIC

The selected songs in Fulani Bolorunduro marriage ceremony are characterised by the call and response pattern, as the

chorus leader(s) calls and the larger group forming the chorus, responds in a melodic repetitive style to the leader's call. According to Kivy, (1994) one of the most frequent forms employed in African music is "the Call and Response technique. This allows for audience and maximal participation, as no one is left out of the performance process, regardless of being under the spotlight or otherwise" (69) Pragmatically, it involves repeating the actual vocal words of the caller(s)/soloist(s), more often with the same melodic techniques. This is a method where a leader usually sings a phrase with the chorus singing back. The response could be a contrast to the call, or could be a repetition of the call. Two or more melodies may be combined to form larger sectional arrangements.

Rhythm

The music in the marriage ceremony is poly- rhythmic in structure and this is obvious in the selected songs that are accompanied by the idiophone instrument of *Fuwadu* which is usually played in a complex repetitive cycle, showing that the power of rhythm in African music is interwoven in nature which distinguishes it from other cultural styles.

Musical example 1

English Translation

Call: *Oleile olo, oleinu alaanu Home full of Kids, Home filled with joy*

Response: *Oleile olo, oleinu alaanu Home full of Kids, Home filled with joy*

Call: *Oleile olo, oleinu alaanu Home full of Kids, Home filled with joy*

Response: *Oleile olo, oleinu alaanu Home full of Kids, Home filled with joy*

oleile

[Composer]

Voice

o lei-le o lo! o lei-mu - u a la-a mu. o lei-le o lo -
o! o lei-mu, a la-a mu! o lei-le o lo, o lei mu - u, a la-a mu - u!

A

Structural Analysis

Language = *Ffulde*

Key Signature = C major

Time Signature = 4/4 (Simple Quaduple time)

First and Last Note = C

Bar = 6 Bars (Music ends with a quaver)

Frequency of Tone

C = 16

D = 3

G = 8

A = 13


Scale = Pentatonic

Highest note = C (On the treble staff)

Lowest note = Middle C (Ledger line)

Range = Octave

Frequency of Rhythmic notes

 -Semiquaver = 14

 -Quaver = 22

 -Dotted Quaver = 1

 -Dotted Crotchet = 2

 -Minim = 1

Total Number of Rhythmic Notes = 40

Harmonic texture = Unison

Melodic Style = Chorus

 - Quaver Rest = 1

 - Crotchet Rest = 1

 -Minim Rest = 1

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE SONG TEXT

It is sung as a prayer for the bride for a fruitful and happy marriage. This song is also in call and response form. Led by the song leader and echoed in response by the chorus. They are usually accompany by *Fawadu* musical instrument

Musical example 2

English Translation

Call: *Miyeti Miyeti Thank you for coming, Thanks for coming*

Response: *Miwawi Miwawi We love you, We love you*

Call: *Miwawi Miwawi We love you, We love you*

Response: *Miyeti Miyeti Thanks for coming, Thanks for coming*

miyeti

[Composer]

Voice

mi ye ti, mi ye ti, mi wa wi, mi wa wi, mi wa wi, mi wa wi, mi ye

ti, mi ye ti. mi ye ti mi ye ti, mi wa wi mi wa wi!

Structural Analysis

Language = *Fufulde*

Key Signature = G major

Time Signature = 4 4 (Simple Quaduple time)

First and Last Note = G

Bar = 6 Bars (Music ends with a quaver)

Frequency of Tone

G = 12

A = 12

B = 6

E = 6

Scale = Pentatonic

Highest note = B (3rd line on the treble staff)

Lowest note = E (1st line on the treble staff)

Range = Octave

Frequency of Rhythmic notes

-Semiquaver = 6



-Quaver = 10



-Dotted Quaver = 6



-Crotchet = 11



-Minim = 1

Total Number of Rhythmic Notes = 36

Harmonic texture = Unison

Melodic Style = Chorus



- Crotchet Rest = 1



oMinim Rest = 1

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SONG TEXT

This song is used as a farewell and/or appreciation song at the end of the marriage ceremony. That is, as a gesture of appreciation to the guests and visitors. It is performed in counter repetition between the leader and the chorus.

Musical example 3

English

Translation

Call: Laila Ilalau There is no God except Allah

Res: Laila Ilalau There is no God except Allah

Lai laa ila lau

The image displays two musical staves for the song 'Lai laa ila lau'. The first staff is labeled 'Call' and the second 'Response'. Both are in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The lyrics 'la i la a i la lau' are written below the notes. The first staff shows the 'Call' part with a rest in the second bar. The second staff shows the 'Response' part with a rest in the first bar. A second system of staves shows the 'Call' and 'Response' parts again, with the 'Call' part having a rest in the second bar and the 'Response' part having a rest in the first bar.

Structural Analysis

1. Language = Arabic
2. Key Signature = G
3. Time Signature = 4_4
4. First and Last Note = G and E
5. Bar = 7 bars
6. Duration = 20 seconds
7. Melodic Texture = Call and Response

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SONG TEXT

The highlighted song above is a worship song to reverence Allah as the supreme God in whom the marriage is secured. It is usually sang when the Islamic solemnisation of the wedding is taking place in order to set the right mood for the occasion. More importantly, the structural and contextual analysis of the selected songs above have reflected that they are predominantly cultural texts with deep Fulani ideology embedded in pentatonic scales,

homophonic texture with frequent call and response and harmony at cardinal points. It should also be noted that given the influence of Islam as the predominant religion in the community, only few songs are employed in the discussion and the sole musical instrument engaged in the marriage ceremony is the *Fuwadu*; an idiophone instrument, except on occasions where the groom is a warrior, which would require the *Goje* as an added instrument.

CONCLUSION

An analytical examination of the performance aesthetics and structural composition of music in Fulani Bolorunduro marriage ceremony has exposed the fact that the mass wedding is culturally instituted to marry off young girls to their spouses some weeks before the Eid-El-Kabir festival, in order to keep in tune with the practice of Islam which is the dominant religion in the community. But, in spite of the influence of Islam in the marriage ceremony, the traditional cultural practices of the Fulani have continued to influence the marriage activities. This is dominant in the performance aesthetics found in dramatic actions, dance, music, costume, make-up and so on, that add meaning, value and colour to the event. By so doing, the celebrants and the spectators are able to entrench their cultural identity, cultural interaction and unity as well as socialisation .

A rider to that is also found in the structure of their musical composition which despite the hybridization of Islamic lyrics in its content, still resonates deep cultural affinity with the Fulani traditions through pentatonic scale, homophonic in texture with frequent call and response, as well as harmony at cardinal points and song texts embedded in the cultural and religious philosophy of the Fulani. The study then concludes that the performance aesthetics in the marriage ceremonies are the cardinal elements used in promoting the Fulani cultural heritage from going into extinction . They should therefore be encouraged, preserved and explored for the promotion of the rich cultural heritage of the Nigerian people.

Shuaib Shadiat Olapeju, *PhD*
&
Popoola, Abimbola Adedoyin
Department of Performing Arts
University of Ilorin, Ilorin Kwara state, Nigeria

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