

CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICAN ART MUSIC: A CASE STUDY[#]

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ABSTRACT

The study examines and analyses the significance of the style of music composition employing traditional and contemporary models noted in the solo voice and piano works of Nketia. It argues that an imaginative African contemporary composer can elect to work within the limitations of selected traditional instruments and create new African music that not only blends their sonorities, but also makes use of appropriate tunes and other materials from traditional or contemporary repertoire. What is of particular interest to us in this paper is the use of new models by the composer to transform the African traditional modes of expression, using techniques that may be foreign or not frequently used in African traditions. The study hopes to contribute to the discourses on African art music as a synthesis of elements of traditional and European resources. It argues that a genuine feeling of African style does not come merely from the use of folk songs and dances. A piece will sound African—Akan, Ewe, Hausa, Yoruba, etc., when the basic characteristics of the source materials feature in the body of the composition. The study is based on analysis and interpretation of three selected solo works of J. H. Kwabena Nketia and on interviews between the author and the composer.

RÉSUMÉ

L'étude examine et analyse l'importance du style de la composition musicale en utilisant les modèles traditionnels et contemporains notés dans la voix solo et œuvres de piano de J. H. Kwabena Nketia. Il affirme qu'un compositeur africain contemporain imaginatif peut choisir de travailler en restant dans les limites de certains instruments traditionnels et créer une nouvelle musique africaine qui non seulement allie les sonorités de ces derniers, mais permet également l'utilisation de mélodies appropriées et d'autres matériels de répertoire traditionnel ou contemporain. Ce qui nous intéresse particulièrement dans cet article,

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c'est l'utilisation de nouveaux modèles par le compositeur pour transformer les modes d'expression traditionnels africains, en utilisant des techniques qui peuvent être inconnues ou rares dans les traditions africaines. L'étude espère contribuer aux échanges sur l'art musical africain en tant que synthèse d'éléments traditionnels et européens. Il fait valoir qu'une véritable sensation du style africain ne se fait pas sentir simplement par les chants et danses folkloriques. Une pièce musicale sonne africaine – Akan, Ewe, Haoussa, Yoruba, etc. – lorsque les caractéristiques de base figurent dans l'ensemble de la composition. L'étude est basée sur l'analyse et l'interprétation d'une sélection de trois œuvres solo de Nketia et sur des entretiens entre l'auteur et le compositeur.

INTRODUCTION

African art music is a new genre that has evolved as a result of historical experience of missionary and colonial intervention. Agawu defines this creative art of composition as the transformation of pre-existing material into new, individualised structures (Agawu 1984: 37). It is an urge to create something that has our own traditional characteristics, such as expanding it or using it as a thematic material in a new context of composition, which is art music. That is a deliberate use of artistic sources and ideas and creative transformation of traditional songs with a western instrument. An important dynamic that provides African music its primary identity lies in the specific types of rhythmic organization evolved by African societies and which are created to a large extent from the prosody used in African languages. This results in a close bond between speech rhythms and musical rhythms, except that musical rhythms are guided by a set of timing principles. Atta Annan Mensah describes the works of Danso Abiam as reflecting these principles, such as giving his pieces evocative openings, followed by snatches of rhythmic motifs, which lengthen into full phrases, carried by melodic instruments. Frequent repetitions occur, with phrases and double phrases, while gapped melodies abound within terminal sections of the music.

Similarly, Atta Annan Mensah makes reference to the style of music arrangement by Yeo Kojo, alias Richard Graves, as having a sudden musical break from the style of his father (Charles Graves Abayie). This sudden break is observed in six of the transcriptions of Fanti songs arranged by Richard Graves with piano accompaniments, which according to Atta Annan Mensah, take turns with the songs in syncopations, demanding extreme alertness on the part of the accompanists. Notes from audience research show that the harmonies of western classical tradition, which the arranger uses, do not affect the integrity of these songs (Atta Annan Mensah: 1998).

In a similar vein, Ephraim Amu is referred to by Agordoh (2004: 38 and Agawu (1984: 38) as the chief advocate of the principle of matching the melody to

the speech tone distribution. Fela Sowando's output includes plainchant for organ in Yoruba idiom. In these, modal harmony keeps the music out of the shackles of Westernism, in spite of the spacious organ sound.

There are also specific tonal characteristics of African music, which are in part guided by tones and intonational processes, and in part by musical considerations related to pattern and progression. An African composer must, therefore, master the fundamentals of African melody and rhythm so that he can create typical African tunes based on any of the varieties of heptatonic, hexatonic and pentatonic scales used in African societies. When he is able to do this, he need not always depend on tunes from the traditional repertoire, for he can compose tunes that would be true to the traditional idiom as the songs of Nketia exemplify.

The challenge in Africa, however, is that due to the colonial music education which introduced African musicians to Western music and Western harmony rather than the multi-level music of Africa, which was unknown to the educators, composers have tended to look more to the West for techniques of multi-voiced music which invariably, is much more complicated than our African forms of multi-part organization. Instead of the traditional forms of choral organization, composers are fascinated by the Western type in which voices are split into parts on the basis of register or range—the soprano, alto, tenor and bass (S.A.T.B) type of choral music, suggesting the adaptation of Western harmonic usage in new African choral music.

Syncretism, therefore, meant the combination of African melodic and rhythmic techniques with adaptations of western harmony—usually tonal harmony—and, in the case of large works, the use of Western developmental techniques. As in the reversal techniques, the issues involved in the use of syncretic techniques are not only technical, but also cultural and may involve the composer in issues of levels of consciousness of personal identity.

Since the creative challenge of this approach lies in re-ordering and using procedures and resources of traditional music without imposing an external framework or idioms from other musical cultures on it, it holds promise for those who feel that the possibilities within the music of Africa, for example, with its very rich diversity of tonal materials, and modes of rhythmic expression, need to be explored for creating master pieces of African music. The study therefore, examines and discusses traditional and contemporary models employed in the solo and piano works of Nketia. Issues for discussion include the exploration of call and response techniques, the relation between melody, rhythm and language, African pianism; improvisation and the application of flattened seventh and augmented fourth as compositional resources in his work; and which is an expression of the kinds of knowledge that Nketia has produced from self-conscious manipulation of traditional music materials and procedures.

As a background to my discussion of the selected works, I begin with a short biography: Joseph Hansen Kwabena Nketia was born on June 22, 1921 at Mampong Asante, in the Ashanti Region of Ghana: the only child of his father,

Akwasi Yeboah and his mother, Akua Adoma. His parents were traders at Effiduase, a cocoa town near Mampong. Nketia, therefore, spent his early childhood years with his parents at Effiduase where he observed and enjoyed performances of traditional Ghanaian music. He was, particularly fascinated by the music of popular performing groups known as ‘sika-rebewu-epere’ and witnessed several performances by such ensembles at Effiduase and Asokore, a nearby town.

Since his father died in his infancy, his mother and grandparents nurtured Kwabena Nketia. When he was seven years old, his mother decided to send him to go and stay with his grandparents at Mampong and start school. His grandparents were Presbyterians. His grandfather, Opanyin Kisi Amoa, who was a Senior Presbyterian, held a powerful position in the church, and his grandmother, Yaa Amankwaa, lived in an area called ‘Sukuu mu’, the location of the Basel mission. As Christians, Kwabena Nketia’s grandparents and uncles who nurtured him were not permitted to participate in performances of traditional music which the church regarded as primitive and pagan. However, the continued loyalty of his mother and other relatives to traditional customs and ways of life provided for Kwabena Nketia a broad range of musical practices and styles in Akan life (DjeDje and Carter, 1989:3).

Although Nketia’s mother was not a member of any traditional group, she joined performances put up by groups such as *adowa* and *nwonkoro*, when she attended funerals and other social functions. The active participation in traditional musical performances by other members of his lineage also aided him in later years to know and understand Akan music as well as traditional songs. According to Nketia, he was fortunate to have had a parent and relatives, who, as Christians, perceived no conflict of interest between attending church services and performing of traditional music concomitantly, and therefore, encouraged him to perform as well as study such music. Below are the author’s own words in honour of his grandmother:

My grandmother’ was the leader of the ‘adowa’ group and gave me all the songs she could remember. She also taught me about the songs. For example, she drew my attention to call and response for which we have terms. She also told me about the technique of interrupting the chorus and of singing on top of the chorus and so forth. It was only later that I found that these were standard ethnomusicological ways of analyzing and looking at music. (Interview with Nketia in October 28, 2014).

After his education at the local primary and middle schools at Mampong, Kwabena Nketia left his hometown for the Presbyterian training college at Akropong-Akwapim in the Eastern Region of Ghana to be trained as a teacher. He studied several subjects but was especially interested in Music and Twi (a dialect of the Akan). He studied music under his mentor, Robert Danso, a well-known theory teacher and organist, whose style of playing the harmonium inspired him.

Under the tutorship of Danso, Nketia's performance on the harmonium improved so much so that during his second year at Akropong he played the instrument at church services both at the College and Presbyterian Church in town. According to Nketia, during his second and third years at the College he became an unofficial assistant to Robert Danso who asked him to copy music on the Blackboard for his [Danso's] music lessons.

In his third year at Akropong, Kwabena Nketia was sent by Robert Danso to teach choirs in parts of the town. This encouraged him to write his own music for such groups known as singing bands. Most of what he wrote then consisted of hymns and marching songs in a western idiom with Twi texts. These he considered as preparatory compositions and started to write more serious pieces after he left college (Akrofi, 1992; 41). In the words of Nketia:

I always think about Danso as the one who actually influenced my musicality. He was indeed responsible for my musicality, while Amu was responsible for my African sensibility (interview with Nketia on October 26, 2014).

It is fascinating to note what Nketia says generally about other people who contributed to his development in music: Kwabena Nketia asserts that it was not only his teachers who made contributions to his musical achievements. One of his classmates at Akropong, Nomo Jones, a native of the coastal town of Ada in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, also influenced him. Nomo was a very good pianist of Jazz and popular music and was fond of ragtime. Nketia's musical style, which he developed in the 1960s through the 1970s, is the result of the influence from Nomo Jones (based on interview with author, October 28, 2014).

An incident in Kwabena Nketia's third year at the Presbyterian Training College set him off into researching into traditional Ghanaian songs. As he recalls:

In my third year at Akropong, our English teacher, Beveridge was telling us about English prosody and used terms such as iambic and dactylic pentameter that fascinated me. Later, I asked myself whether we had similar things in Akan prosody. As I could not find the answer, I tried to write down some of the traditional songs I had learnt as a child at Mampong with the intention of analyzing them to find iambic and trochaic pentameters, but was disappointed. This led me to develop great interest collecting more traditional songs in order to acquaint myself with the distinctive features of poetry and prose styles in traditional society (Vieta, 1999: 446).

After graduation in 1941 as a Certificated Trained Teacher, Kwabena Nketia was appointed to the staff in 1942 to teach Music and Twi. In addition to his teaching duties, he worked as an assistant editor to C. A. Akrofi, the Chief Editor for Twi, appointed by the Government Department of Education to examine, edit and write

reports on all manuscripts submitted to it before they were published. The literary and scholarly interest he developed in his early career was stimulated to a large extent by this work. In Nketia's words (in Vieta, 1999: 446):

Experience gained in this work made it possible for me to organize the texts of the songs I collected into a publishable manuscript. This anthology of over a hundred Akan songs completed in 1944 was later published in 1949 by Oxford University Press. That was my first book in musicology.

Akan songs in performance practice generally consist of short phrases and themes and are allusive in character. Nketia must have arrived at similar conclusions, for the characteristics of Akan songs summarised and exemplified in his *Songs for Solo Voice and Piano (Sankudwom)*, three of which are discussed in this paper. These characteristics are further elaborated in his *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People* published in 1955 and his *Folksongs of Ghana* published by Oxford University Press in 1963.

What is of particular interest to us in this paper is how the composer has applied or modified these traditional characteristics or their underlying "theoretical principles" in his creative work, for Nketia is not only a composer but also an ethnomusicologist and a writer of books on African musicology and culture. In addition to his songs for voice and piano, he has pieces for solo instruments and piano. So he is not versed only in the techniques of his tradition, but also in those of the colonial legacy. Accordingly, he regards the idiom, which emerges from this creative synthesis as a "contemporary" Ghanaian tradition since he follows in the footsteps of his predecessors—Ephraim Amu and Robert O. Danso who had also written a few songs with piano/harmonium accompaniment with success. However, he followed other lines of development in his work, as we shall see presently from the examples discussed in this paper.

Style of Nketia's solo songs

It is common practice for African ethnomusicologists to combine their work as scholars with creative activity. This dual approach to professional engagement is what Euba refers to as creative ethnomusicology. The phrases "creative musicology" and "creative ethnomusicology", according to Euba, refer to the process of incorporating research-derived musical material (of oral musical traditions) into notation-based compositions. Explaining this concept, Euba states that: "composers around the world (especially those from non-Western countries) are producing music in which resources derived from traditional and folk music are combined with Western techniques of composition (normally the area of specialization of historical musicologists and music theorists)..." This dual approach to professional engagement is well illustrated in the career of Kwabena

Nketia whose pioneering roles as a scholar and composer represent a model that has been embraced by many younger ethnomusicologists.

The phrase “creative ethnomusicology,” though coined by Akin Euba, is conceptually reminiscent of the folk-inspired compositions of European composers like Bela Bartok, Moussorgsky, and Kodaly, to mention just a few (Omojola 2001). In the view of Kofi Agawu, the concept of “creative ethnomusicology” represents two related modes of representation. Firstly, he describes the writing of musical compositions that are based on indigenous oral traditions as “music-on-music exploration” (Agawu, 2011: 51) and a “meta-musical” representation of “existing traditional musics” (Agawu, 1992).

Because of Nketia’s research and literary interests, a number of what might aptly be described as “transformations” occur in his works. Instead of the traditional practice of composing a song for solo and chorus, Nketia’s three solo songs under discussion are intended to be performed by a solo singer and an accompanist. Accordingly, he finds other ways of exploring call and response. It is interesting to note that as part of the creative transformation technique, applied by the composer, call and response patterns often occur between the vocal and piano parts as a formal technique in the melodic line or as an interactional process that links the vocal and instrumental parts at particular moments in his songs.

A typical example is the song, *Yaanom Montie*. In this song, intermittent pauses in the voice part have been carefully ordered to permit a dialogue between the two timbre forces, the voice and the piano (measures 40-46). The piano in these measures is made to speak, except that it is not everybody who can comprehend its language. It speaks using musical phrases instead of verbal statements, which are responded to by the voice. The dialogue starts in measure “40” by the piano and is replied to immediately by the voice supported by the piano in measure 41. The piano then continues the dialogue in measure “43” basing its statement on the text *ɔbɔadeɛ wɔhɔ yia*, which is duly responded to immediately by the voice from measure “44-45” with the text “*yensuro korakora*.” The dialogue between the voice and the piano ends at measure “48.”

From measures “46-48, there is some kind of dovetailing as the voice takes off even when the piano has not finished making its statement. This technique is very common with most African styles of singing and is often referred to as overlapping call and response, see Fig.1

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Solo and Piano. The Solo part is written in a treble clef, 3/4 time signature, and B-flat major key. It features a melodic line with lyrics: "Yen su ro kora kora Yen su ro kora kora O bo a-dee wo ho". The Piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs), 3/4 time signature, and B-flat major key. It provides a harmonic accompaniment with various chords and melodic fragments. A bracket at the bottom of the piano part indicates "Measures 40-48".

Fig.1

After the dialogue, there is a modification in the interlude to introduce the next intervening phrase. In the accompaniment, measure “37” becomes a variant to measure “31” and at the same time the source of the material for the piano section at measure “43”. The accompaniment ends with the voice on a tonic chord in the lower register, but the piano dilates to end in the upper register to accord it a dramatic ending.

Employment of African pianism

Instead of accompanying his songs with traditional percussive instruments, his songs are accompanied by the piano, a Western instrument. He compensates for the absence of these “time beating instruments” by exploring the lyrical and percussive capabilities of the keyboard as well as structural roles, such as those employed in *Seperewa*, a traditional harp lute for accompanying singing. Because the piano is a harmonic instrument, he makes selective use of what it offers to enrich his songs by combining traditional parallel harmonies and vertical harmony in such a way as to define or reinforce particular progressions or create contrasts in texture and motion in sound. In other words, he develops his own African style of pianism, a term he describes as referring to:

A style of piano music that derives its characteristic idiom from the procedures of African percussion music as exemplified in bell patterns, drumming, and xylophone and *mbira* music. It may use simple or extended rhythmic motifs or the lyricism of traditional songs and even those of African popular music as the basis of its rhythmic phrases. It is open ended as far as the use of tonal materials is concerned except that it may draw on the modal and cadential characteristics of traditional music. Its harmonic idiom may be tonal, consonant or dissonant in whole or in part, depending on the preferences of the composer, the mood or impressions he wishes to create or how he chooses to reinforce, heighten or soften the jaggedness of successive percussive attacks. In

this respect the African composer does not have to tie himself down to any particular school of writing, if his primary aim is to explore the potential of African rhythmic and tonal usages cited from *Dialects in African Pianism* by Gyimah Larbi with preface by Nketia (Nketia 1994: iii).

Akin Euba is the originator of this concept when from 1964 onwards he began to seriously explore what he regarded as the African percussive aspects of the piano. According to Euba, he was at the time beginning to develop the idea of an “African pianism,” a style of piano playing which is as distinct as a jazz pianism or a Chopinesque pianism. In an article entitled ‘Traditional Elements as the Basis of New African Art Music Euba writes:

For those composers interested in cross-cultural musical synthesis, this writer sees a possible line of evolution in the use of the Western pianoforte in combination with African drums and other instruments of percussion. The piano already displays certain affinities with African music, and by creating a type of *African pianism* to blend with African instruments, it should be possible to achieve a successful fusion. (Euba, 1970: African Urban Notes 5/4)

Nketia’s songs are neither extempore composition nor are they songs that give room for improvisations. Both the text and the music are written down and are required to be interpreted by performers who have previously learned them from the scores. As Nketia states in a paper on ‘the musician in Akan society’ (Nketia 1973), this does not mean that he does not employ “the traditional” approach to composition as a technique of spontaneous expression or as an art whose primary aim is to bring into being coherent body of expressions for performance in particular contexts, as Kwasi Ampene (2005) shows in his study of the *Creative Process in Nnwonkoro*.

He believes however, that musical items deliberately created in the latter manner are “crystallized in the originator’s mind and subsequently realised as musical events”, and that in whatever way creativity is approached, the creative individual operates within a defined musical style. He draws from the body of fixed forms and structures such as rhythm patterns, melodic motives and cadential patterns as well as stock expressions established in the tradition; the principles applied to the ordering of the constituents of the structures, and the manner in which all these are used to make musical statements.

As far as the context of performance is concerned, while traditional songs are performed “in playing parties in which many of the songs of the same kind may be used in succession,” Nketia’s songs are intended to be performed individually as African *art* songs, that is as a genre of Art music, a term used for convenience of reference for music designed for intent listening or presentation as concert music;

music in which expression of feeling is combined with craftsmanship and a sense of beauty (Nketia 2004).

To clarify what Art music represents, Akin Euba gives it a contextual definition for the benefit of those unfamiliar with it. He points out that:

Unlike traditional music whose context of performance is community based, this art music is music designed for performance usually in an auditorium before a clearly defined audience (Euba 1977: 14-15).

In adopting the concept of art song as a genre of art music, Nketia could have followed the example of musicians who arrange “folk songs” or “spirituals” for performance as art songs. He chose, however, to write his own songs, ostensibly in the same traditional idiom. Indeed it was only after he had developed this that he began to arrange or re-compose a few traditional songs, such as *Dantuo mu awɔ*, *Obaa Hemmaa Akyaa* as art songs for voice and piano.

As I made these comparisons between Nketia’s compositions for solo voice and piano and noted what is similar or different in his works from traditional songs in conception, form and structure, or looked at his “versification” and the allusive nature of his poetry, or considered his treatment of form and harmonic procedures, it seemed to me that an African composer of art music can achieve modernity in his own terms through the selective use of traditional and non-traditional sources and the application of **techniques of transformation** that enables him to establish an idiom or style whose internal logic derives its coherence from the synthesis created in the process. By ‘transformation’ I mean any operation or process that a composer applies to a musical, structural or contextual variable. As exemplified in the works of Nketia discussed subsequently, it enables an African composer who proceeds from the fundamentals of his own tradition not only to maintain his cultural identity, but also to develop a personal style that incorporates his selective use of intercultural techniques and resources from his encounters with other traditions.

The songs of Nketia’s Sankudwom ensure that, as far as possible, words and melody complement and do not contradict each other. That is to say, the melody of the song takes after the contour of the language. Akan is a tonal language. This means that ‘tone is phonemic’ or serves to distinguish words in much the same way as do vowels and consonants (Nketia 1974: 184). Although there are arguments to the contrary see, for example Ansre (1961: 19), it is generally agreed that speech tones may be discussed on three levels high, mid and low, with two types of motion, rising and falling. (Jones 1959: 232) qualifies this basic framework by describing these levels as bands—high band, mid band and low band, rather than as three distinct pitch levels. Each level is therefore an area, or in musical terms, an interval. Several variations are thus possible within each band. Against this background, we shall now turn to the analysis of the three songs,

beginning with those composed in April 1944 before Nketia travelled to the United Kingdom, followed by *Wonya amane a na wohu wodɔfo*.

When Nketia set out to collect traditional Akan songs in 1942, the *Adowa Hema* (queen of *adowa*) of Mampong Asante who sang several songs to him told him that *adowa* songs have two kinds of repertoires: *Ahemfo Nnwom*—songs composed in honour of chiefs, and *Nnwom hunu*, (ordinary songs); (see Nketia 1949). The former are songs composed among Akans for a chief during his reign or later in his memory. The composition of the songs, *Yaanom montie* and *Onipa beyɛɛ bi* by Nketia follow this repertoire. They were both inspired by the death of Nana Sir Ofori Atta I, a prominent Ghanaian chief, to honour him even though his name was not mentioned in any of them.² Nketia used stock expressions and the traditional technique of allusion to make them context specific, so that a performer could sing them on any suitable occasion as art songs without reference to the specific event that inspired their creation or their function as mourning songs, where appropriate.

The Creative process

The creative process employed in the composition of the three solo songs under discussion was based on the structures and forms in the culture of the Akan. Nketia's laments thus draws on popular Akan proverbs and metaphors and repetitive style of traditional verse. As in traditional practice, Nketia followed the intonation and rhythm of the texts as he composed the melody for each line of the text using the lilt of a traditional bell pattern like *adowa*, *nwonkoro*, the rhythm of a traditional children's game etc. defined by its standard bell pattern as the framework of the phrase structures.

To accompany the songs, Nketia chose the keyboard, a foreign instrument which he learned to play at the Akropong Training College during his student days. He chose the keyboard because the Akan scale is a seven-tone scale just like the western scale used widely for compositions for the keyboard. Though he chose the keyboard, he did not accompany his songs in the western hymn style. He employed several features of the traditional way of accompanying a song. His piano part is thus melodic, rhythmic and percussive. It used harmonic rhythms intermittently as substitutes for the beats and hand clapping, and drums rhythms for brief moments, as well as call and response, counter melodies, counter rhythms, and fill ups in the style of *seperewa*.

Nketia's choice of harmony is guided by the "essential: or primary tones of the melody which are sometimes displayed by neighbour tones required by the speech intonation contour.

² Okyenhene Nana Sir Ofori Atta I was the paramount chief or king of Akyem Abuakwa State from 1881 to 1943.

Analysis of the Songs

i. Yaanom Montie

In *Yaanom montie* the composer attempts to portray in words and music, a sudden change of events. In this change of events the hopes and aspirations of the people of Ghana and Abuakwa State in particular, were suddenly crushed owing to the unexpected demise of their distinguished chief and statesman. The indispensable role this statesman played in the society had invariably made him the “soul” and the “life wire” of the family and the community at large. It was around him that the socio-economic and the infrastructural development of the area revolved. The announcement of his sudden death therefore threw the whole Akyem community into a state of disarray and hopelessness.

Such was his stature and national importance that the composer equated Ofori Atta I with *gyedua kɛsɛɛ*, the big tree with a huge crown under which people sit to relax and enjoy the cool breeze and protection from the scorching sun. It will be noted that when a new Akan chief is installed, he plants a tree that provides shade for his people. This symbolises his role as a comforter, one who ‘cools’ (*dwo* in Twi) his subjects. The tree is also believed to be the dwelling-place of that chief’s spirit. The death of a tree is metaphor for the dying of a chief in some Ghanaian communities. Enemies of the community would aim to destroy a town’s shade tree to show that they had destroyed the order manifested through its chief’s reign (McLeod 1981: 29-30).

The song poses the rhetorical question: Now that this “big tree” is no more, “where will the people therefore gather for relaxation and for shelter from the sun and rains?” — “*she na yɛbɛgye mfɛrɛ o?* In effect they are wailing and crying because of the loss of their key and reliable bulwark, ‘the chief.’

Yaanom montie is in two sections, A and B, each with a different level of emotional intensity. It has one long story line and centres around one basic theme, *Yaanom montie na gyama ahia yɛn ahia yɛn*. This is followed immediately with the second section with the statement, *ɔbɔadeɛ wɔhɔ yi a yensuro korakora, aboa onni dua, Nyame na ɔpra ne ho yɛhwɛ no ara...oo*.

The use of the word ‘Creator’ (*ɔbɔadeɛ*) in the second section of the song and which is in reference to God or the Supreme Being inspires and serves as a source of hope and confidence for the people. They console themselves with the fact that, though the king, their sole provider, is no more, the Creator is there to intercede on their behalf to alleviate their anticipated hardships. It is therefore incumbent upon them to look up to Him as captured in the phrases:

Twi

*ɔbɔadeɛ wɔhɔ yi a yensuro korakora,
ɔbɔadeɛ wɔhɔ yi a yeesu ayâ dâh?*

English Translation

Once the creator is alive, we are never afraid
Once the creator is alive why do we have to cry?

Ɔbɔadeɛ wɔhɔyia yeesuro ayɛ dɛn? Once the creator is alive why do we have to be afraid?
Aboa a onni dua, Nyame na ɔpra It is God that brushes flies off the tail-less
ne ho yɛhwɛ no ara oo animal, we look up to him.

The above text is a summary of the people's beliefs and confidence in the creator, implying that once the creator is alive, they shall never be in want of anything. As a result they have decided to put all their faith and trust in Him. Following *yaanom montie* is the analysis of *Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi*.

While *Yaanom Montie* was used to comment on the achievements and the perceived indispensability of the late king Nana Sir Ofori Atta I, *Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi* is a lament dedicated to Nana Sir Ofori Atta and focuses on the limitation of man in the light of what he can do in his life time. It also touches on the vulnerability of man vis a vis death. It has its theme woven around, *Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi na ɛnyɛ ne nyinara* (a person does what he can in his lifetime, and not everything). This theme, which is a common Akan saying, is used in this context to draw society's attention to the fact that, because of man's mortal nature, there is always a limit to what he can do during his lifetime. The late Ofori Atta is thus to be acknowledged for whatever he was able to accomplish during his life time, though left to him, he would have loved to do everything under his power and authority to satisfy every member of his society.

Sir Ofori Atta I, as the texts describe him, was someone who during his lifetime was self sufficient as we can see from the rhetorical questions, *Ɔwora sika ne deɛbɛn*, lit. 'What was money to Ɔwora?' (*Ɔwora* as used in the text is in reference to Sir Ofori Attah). He had everything in abundance. Apart from riches, he was someone who was well built, strong and handsome, as we can see from the texts below:

Ɔwora ahoɔden ne deɛn; what was strength to Ɔwora?
Ɔwora ahoɔfɛ ne deɛbɛn; what was beauty to Ɔwora?

The text also describes him as a man of wisdom, *Ɔwora nyansa ne deɛbɛn*, (lit. what was wisdom to him?) This is because during his reign, Nana Sir Ofori Attah was adjudged one of the greatest, wisest and knowledgeable visionaries and courageous paramount chiefs Akyem Abuakwa and the Gold Coast had ever had. Despite all these accolades, one cannot say that Sir Ofori Atta I was able to accomplish all that he purposed to achieve during his lifetime. He would have loved to do more for his people and society in general, but as a mortal being, there was little he could do when death decided to lay its icy cold hand on him. The sudden loss of Nana Ofori Attah clearly fits into one of the descriptions given to death in an Akan saying: 'If death comes to kill you and you supplicate it, calling it 'father' it will kill you, and if you call it 'mother' it will kill you'. It does not

discriminate between the young and the elderly; ‘when death overtakes you, you do not say to it; look, there is an old woman, take her’ (Sarpon 1974: 23; Opoku 1978: 134).

The text of the song thus denotes a people in a grief-stricken state because they can no more find their loved one to interact with him. They have combed every place and yet cannot locate him. In their desperation, they begin to ask questions such as, *enne yere Owora ne no akasa, she na yebehu no?* Lit. ‘today we are looking for Owora to communicate with him, where can we find him?’ This is followed with the reply, *Adomankoma wuo de no koo, Owora daberε ne nseε do*, lit. ‘Manifold death has taken him away for Owora’s abode is in the nether world. This section marks the climax of the song, as emotions tend to intensify beyond control. From *Owora beyεε bi*, I now move to the third song, *Wonya amane a na wohu wo dfo*.

This third song, *wonya amane a na wohu wo dfo*, literally meaning, ‘it is when you are in trouble that you find your true lover’ was composed in 1942, two years before the two earlier ones under discussion. The theme of this song, which is *wonya amane a na wohu wodfo*, is a proverbial saying often used to portray the unpredictable nature of man. The first two songs are contextually tied to funeral situations, but this third song *wonya amane* is a commentary on social life and reflects on the value of a ‘reliable and dependable friend.’

The story line of the song presents a picture of someone who as a result of his wealth is surrounded by several friends. This wealthy person being so naive and unsuspecting about the motives of these friends invests all his trust and confidence in them. He enjoys every bit of his wealth with these friends, making sure that they are always comfortable. This man unexpectedly falls into calamity and expects reciprocity from these trusted friends for him to overcome the challenge. Unfortunately, all the friends except one turn their back to him leaving him completely to his fate. In his desperation, the man remarks, *wonya amane a na wohu wo dfo*, ‘it is when you are in trouble that you see your true lover.’

This proverb in no uncertain terms is a reflection of the ‘double’ face of man. When all is well with you, he feels comfortable to be with you and is ready to execute any work you assign him in humility. The moment things begin to ‘fall apart’ and you need his service most, that is the time that he will demonstrate to you his ‘true nature.’

Yaanom montie is relevant to *Onipa beyεε bi* as the two songs demonstrate two ways of making a statement about a person. In contrast is *Wonya amane a na wohu wodfo* which is a story line. Again it is a proverb which the Akan in general believe in and which has meaning in terms of real life.

The compositional process

Unison and melodic fragments that are an octave apart dominate the piano part. Bar 12 consists of double thirds that are also an octave apart. The use of parallel thirds and unisons also serve as a legitimate harmonic system. According to Nketia, “singing in unison or in octaves, where men and women sing together, is a common form of choric organisation in Ghana” (Nketia 1962: 54. Undoubtedly he tries to apply this ethnomusicological finding practically in this section of his composition.

An interesting feature of the piece is tonality. Nketia applies this principle of modality to the heptatonic scale. He begins the piece in key A flat major, but then uses a flattened seventh (B flat) in bars 9, 13 and 25 as well as 48 and 50 (flattening notes on C to push them to sound as B flat) This reminds us of his statement that ‘the flattened seventh, is frequent and well established in Akan vocal music’ (Nketia, 1962: 35). Similarly, the use of the augmented fourth (F sharp) in bars 19, 20, 33, 42 and 43 draws our attention to his statement that ‘the raised fourth is somewhat rare in Akan music, though it occurs, as characteristic of individual style (ibid)’. Although the melodic and rhythmic materials used in this piece are original, some of them, especially the melodic materials, nevertheless, show an influence of Akan vocal music.

Repetitions and sequential patterns

A common feature of all the songs is the use of repetitions. This is a very important tool as it seeks to emphasise important statements in the song. In all the three songs, we have important statements and names recurring.

The first phrases of the songs, *Yaanom montie*, and *Onipa beyee bi* begin in the upper registers of the treble staff and are followed by sequential repetitions of the same phrases at the lower register. Though *Wonya amane a na wohu wodfo* follows the same compositional process, both the first and the second phrases begin in the lower register. See Figures 1.0, 1.1, 1.2

Fig. 1.0

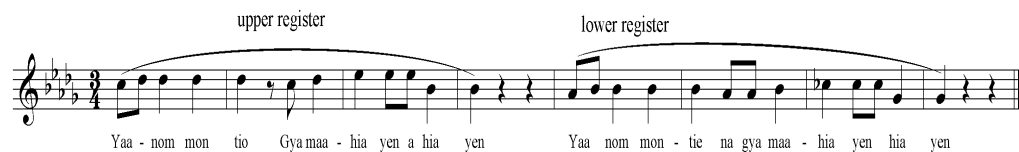


Fig. 1.1

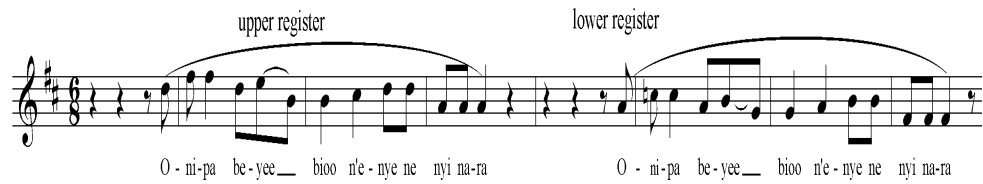
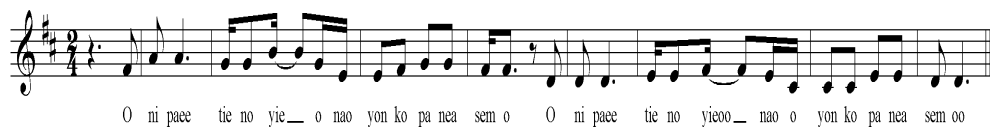


Fig. 1.2



While the first sections of the first two songs begin in the upper register and end in the lower register, the second sections begin from the upper register and end in the lower register. In contrast, the first section of the third song *Wonya amane a na wohu wodfo* begins in the lower register on the median note (m) and ends in the lower register on the tonic note just a tone above middle C. The second section however begins in the upper register and ends in the lower register. It is to be noted here, that the application of repetitive and sequential patterns helps to create contrasts in levels of mood and emotional intensity in the piece.

Though all the three songs have two distinct sections, it is only *Yaanom Montie* which is linked by a distinct 6 bar interlude. The structure of *Yaanom Montie* is thus:

YaanomMontie

- 1st section: Bars 1-23.
- Interlude: 2nd half of bar 24-2nd beat of bar 30.
- 2nd section: last beat of bar 30 to the end.

In traditional practice, many songs, especially those accompanying dance are created in a form that allows them to be repeated over and over again. Some portions of the verse may be changed with each repetition in order to preserve the tune identity of the song, while in other songs a verse may be repeated in its entirety without textual variations. These practices are reflected in the songs under consideration.

The songs are built around short statements and phrases, which the composer develops into a verse using devices such as elaborations, extension and expansion. Other devices are repetitions, stock expressions, praise names and identity tags,

etc. For example, right from the beginning, the composer extends the theme *Yaanom montie na gyama ahia yen*, with a repeat of the phrase *ahia yen* to read *Yaanom montie na gyama ahia yen, ahia yen*. Following from this first line is the use of the proverb, *gyedua kɛsɛ ɛ esi abɔnten na anya atutu yi...oo*, (the big tree on the field has fallen) which is also elaborated on with the rhetorical question, *ehe na yɛbɛgye mfɛre..oo?* (Where shall we therefore gather and enjoy the cool breeze)? In the second section of the same song there is the use of another Akan proverb, which reads, *aboa onni dua, Nyame na ɔpra ne ho*. (it is God who brushes flies off the tail-less animal).

Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi is structured around the theme, *Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi na ɛnye ne nyinara* (A person does what he can in his lifetime) which the composer develops into a verse using the same techniques as in *Yaanom montie*.

The verse begins with the phrase, *Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi na ɛnye ne nyinara* which is repeated sequentially on the second line to create balance. The composer then picks a portion of the first section of the same phrase to continue with the process, but replaces the head word, *Onipa* with *Owora* to read, *Owora bɛyɛɛ bi o*, which is also repeated. Following is the introductory phrase, *Onipa bɛyɛɛ bi na ɛnye ne nyinara* which the composer uses to conclude the first section of the song.

The second section which makes indirect references to the personality, social standing and the general stature of Sir Ofori Atta I during his life time begins with the phrase: *ɔwora ahɔɔfɛ ne deɛn*, which is repeated four times. Each line however, reflects on a specific aspect of his personality and stature as we can see in the texts below:

<i>ɔwora ahɔɔfɛ ne deɛn,</i>	what was beauty to <i>ɔwora</i> ? (He had it)
<i>ɔwora ahɔɔden ne deɛn,</i>	what was strength to <i>ɔwora ra</i> ? (He had it)
<i>ɔwora sika ne deɛben,</i>	what was money to <i>ɔwora</i> ? (He had it)
<i>ɔwora nyansa ne deɛben,</i>	what was wisdom to <i>ɔwora</i> ? (He had it)

The third section of the song, which actually provides a hint about the loss of *ɔwora* begins with the phrase, *ɛnnɛ yɛpɛ ɔwora wɔra ne no akasa, ehe na yɛbehu no?*(today we are looking for *ɔwora* to interact with, where shall we find him)? For the next line, the composer picks the phrase, *yɛpɛ ɔwora*, (we are looking for *ɔwora*) and links it to another phrase, *ɔwora he na yɛbehu no?* (*ɔwora* where shall we find him?); all from the first phrases of the third section. The two short phrases put together thus read: *Yɛpɛ ɔwora, ɔwora he na yɛbehu no?* We are looking for *ɔwora*, *ɔwora*, where shall we find him? Following is the response in reference to his whereabouts which is the nether world. This begins with the phrase, *ɔdomankoma wuo de no kɔoo*, (death has taken him away), and is balanced by, *ɔwora dabre ne nseɛ do*, (*ɔwora*'s abode is the nether world). The last section is a recapitulation of the first phrase starting from the middle portion,

which begins with the phrase, *ɔwora beyee bi oo* (*ɔwora* accomplished what he could).

The last phrase thus reads:

<i>ɔwora beyee bi oo,</i>	<i>ɔwora</i> accomplished what he could
<i>ɔwora beyee bi oo,</i>	<i>ɔwora</i> accomplished what he could
<i>ɔnipa beyee bi oo na enyene nyinara,</i>	A person accomplishes what he can in,
<i>ɔworaee</i>	his lifetime, <i>ɔworaee</i>
<i>Onipa beyee bi oo, na enyene nyinaraoo.</i>	A person accomplishes what he can in his
	life time and not everything.

The phrases of the songs are repeated because they have been set to music. The repetitions thus allow the composer to balance his phrases. If it were just the text, the repeats would not be so many. A unique features of the songs is that, unlike the practice in traditional society where names in songs have specific contextual or historical reference, those in the Nketia songs under discussion are fictitious or imaginary and are used either for their phonaesthetic interest or as symbols for the creation of images or sentiments which can be shared at all times irrespective of the personality or event that triggered them.

Pitch

There are other factors that affect the disposition of pitch elements in these songs under discussion quite apart from speech tones. One factor is the intervallic pattern created by the succession of tones. As the foregoing description has shown, speech tones only influence melodic contour or direction, not the actual intervallic succession. A more conspicuous example is the treatment of some phrase units like *po....a* in the song *wonya amane* (fig 1.3); *ahia* in *Yaanom montie* (fig. 1.4); and *beyee bioo* as in the song *Onipa beyee bio*. The important factor here is the descent.

Fig.1.5



The technique of close correspondences between melody and text permeates the whole music since the Akan language is a tonal language and the relative pitch at which a syllable is spoken is that which helps to determine the meaning of the word. The melodies are thus folk-like, generally conjunct and free flowing. They are dominantly characterized by intervals of 2nds and 3rds with few upward and downward leaps as shown above. It can thus be inferred that the technique of melody construction employed by the composer in all the three songs is influenced by those of Akan traditional compositional practice which calls for close correspondences between the rhythmic and melodic contour of musical phrases

and verbal phrases to forestall any distortion in the meaning of the texts. And it is this technique of melody construction that gives the piece its African character.

Another feature of the melody is that it is pregnant with sequential and repetitive patterns invariably to enforce emotions or sentiments. Measures 5-8 of *Yaanom montie* for example are given sequential treatment at measures 9-12. Fig.1.6

Fig.1.6



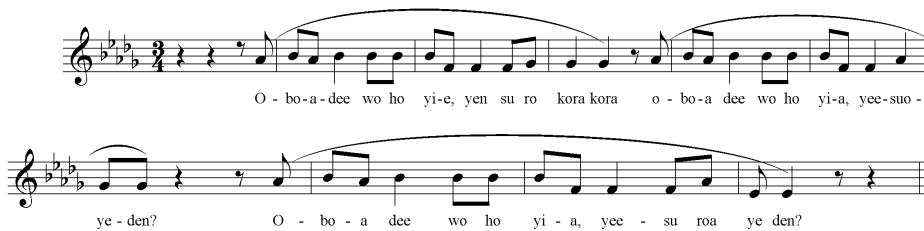
A similar pattern is located at measures 41-42 and 44-45. Fig.1.7

Fig.1.7



The three main repetitive patterns in *Yaanom Montie* are found at measures 30-33, and 36-39.

Fig.1.8



These repetitive patterns follow each other directly and are exact in text, rhythm and melody, except at the last measure of each phrase where the melody is slightly modified to reflect the change in text.

The rhythm of the three songs is customary of folk melodies and shows a close correspondence between the span of verbal phrases and musical phrases. Where the span of the verbal phrase is shorter than the musical phrase, the difference is compensated for by prolongation or the addition of half open vowels such as oo, and ee, as exemplified in the phrases, “*Yaanom.....ee! ehe na yebegye mfere.....oo,*” and *ɔwora...ee, bɛyɛɛ bi... oo* etc.

The relative lengths of syllables in spoken text also determine the lengths of note values. Thus the durational values corresponding to the two basic syllable types, (short and long) is what has been used to provide a basis for the

organization of different rhythmic patterns made up of sequences of ϵ and θ or their combination, as well as combinations of ξ and ϵ as in the examples below.



It is as a result of this rule that various sections of the song assume an independent and unique character.

The harmonic structure of the songs shows a fusion of both Western and African traditional harmonic conventions with the African traditional conventions dominating. Like the harmony of most *abibidwom* of the Fante Methodist church in the Central Region of Ghana and some Western music of the romantic period, a piece of music can start and end on any chord, particularly on the supertonic and the subdominant chord *ray* and *fah*. A typical demonstration is found in the piano introduction to *Yaanom Montie*, which begins on chord IV through chord V to I. In view of the unusual use of chord four at the start of the music, the establishment of the key of the music is displaced until in bar IV when it gets fully anchored on a tonic chord (IV-V-I) to get the key firmly established.



Though this harmonic scheme may sound unusual, it is a common phenomenon in most Akan traditional songs in Ghana; and it is that which helps to give the songs their traditional African character and flavour.

The solo voice joins the piano at measure five and from this point they both move together with the piano providing rhythmic and harmonic support to the voice. The piano for the most part employs block chord accompaniment at various sections of the music, but this is organised in such a way that it does not drown the verbal part. This block chord accompaniment is what Nketia refers to as jazz style of accompaniment, which he learnt from Robert Danso, his mentor and also from his classmate, Nomo Jones, at Akropong. It fills in when the voice is silent and plays an interlude between the verses. To highlight the elegiac and reflective nature of the statements of the vocal line, the piano observes intermittent rests and pauses. These techniques can be observed at measures 9-10, 48-49, and 51. At measures 13-14 the piano remains silent to allow the listeners to get a clear import of the announcement. The voice thus proceeds unaccompanied in these bars. See Fig1.10

At measure 51, only the right hand is left to support the voice with two chord accompaniments. This also helps to project the message more distinctly.

Fig.1.10

Musical score for Fig. 1.10. The Solo part is marked 'Moderato' and includes lyrics: "Yaa nom mon - tie na gya maa - bo a-dec wo ho yi-a, yen su-ro bio al O bo-a-dec wo ho gyodua ke-sre sia bon-ten". The Piano part shows accompaniment for measures 9-10, 48-49, 51, and 13-14.

Another technique employed by the composer is the use of block chords and long notes in the piano part while the voice part keeps moving actively in quarterly projections. See measures 17-18 below.

Fig 1.11

Musical score for Fig. 1.11. The Solo part has a melodic line, and the Piano part features block chords and long notes.

This device also helps to highlight specific statements or motifs in the vocal part and helps to create rhythmic contrast between the voice line and the accompaniment. Dynamic indications that are often moderately loud in the piano part also help to enforce the idea of highlighting certain portions of the text.

Fig.1.12

Musical score for Fig. 1.12. The Solo part includes lyrics: "mfe re oo Yaa nom se bi! O". The Piano part shows accompaniment for measures 18-20 and 24-30, with a dynamic marking of "mf".

To provide bridges between vocal phrases and so ensure continuous flow of the music, the piano provides an interlude any time there is a pause in the voice part. See example at Fig1.12 above from measures 18-21 and measures 24-30.

After the announcement of the death of the king in the first section of the song, the piano takes over with a ten bar interlude, from the second beat of bar 24 to bar 30. This serves as the main link between the two sections of the song. By then the

people have heard the message and are contemplating what to do. Not only does the piano play an interlude, but it also tries to use the interlude to comment on the message. It moves in thirds and double thirds from the middle register before falling to form a dominant 7th chord at measure 30 (application of parallel harmony by the piano). It is important to establish that each of the pieces under discussion begins with a piano introduction of varied lengths before the entry of the solo voice.

These piano introductions, as shown below, are reminiscent of the traditional way of proclaiming an event. In the traditional setting, important messages are always sent through the town crier by the chief or his representative. Before the announcement, the town crier beats the bell, *kon, kon, kon*, to capture the people's attention. Instead of the bell, the composer uses the piano to play this role before the entry of the voice part. See examples below:

Fig.1.13

Piano introduction to Yaanom Montie

Musical score for Fig. 1.13, Piano introduction to Yaanom Montie. The score is in 3/4 time, marked Moderato with a tempo of quarter note = 108. It features a Solo voice line and a Piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a series of chords in the middle register, moving in thirds and double thirds, and ending with a dominant 7th chord at measure 30.

Musical score for Fig. 1.14, Piano introduction to Onipa beyεε bi. The score is in 3/4 time and marked with a '5' above the first measure. It features a Piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Fig.1.14 Piano introduction to Onipa beyεε bi.

Fig.1.15

Piano introduction to Wonya Amane A Na Wohu Wo d.fo

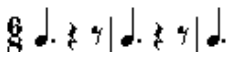
Musical score for Fig. 1.15, Piano introduction to Wonya Amane A Na Wohu Wo d.fo. The score is in 3/4 time, marked Allegro with a tempo of quarter note = 108. It features a Voice solo line and a Piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a series of chords in the middle register, moving in thirds and double thirds, and ending with a dominant 7th chord at measure 30.

In all the songs it is the base line or the accompaniments that defines the beat structure or the lilt of the music, as it is that which is used to play the bell patterns or the time line. *Yaanom Montie* for instance is based on the lilt of an Akan game song called *peewa* as shown below:



Onipa Beyee Bi is based on the rhythm



which later changes to 

For the purpose of variety, it breaks to adopt a third rhythmic motif as shown below:



Bar 33-38.

The piano accompaniment of *Onipa beyee bi* from bars 33- 43 is suggestive of a simulation of traditional drumming on the piano using counter melodies and counter rhythms. For example, while the right hand is playing the smaller or supporting drums using broken chords and triplets, the left hand supports on the big drums with simple rhythmic patterns to paint the picture of a typical traditional funeral scene (Bars 23-29 and (33–43). After a two and half-bars silence between bars 29 and 33, the drumming becomes more intensified to mark the climax of the funeral scene, where people are seen wailing uncontrollably. At this point the left hand joins the right hand on the piano to play triplets to reflect the excitement and the confusion that has erupted as a prelude to the final interment **Fig.1.16**

The image shows a musical score for 'Wonya Amane' in 6/8 time. It consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system shows a regular eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The second system, starting at measure 30, features a '2 and half bar silence' in the left hand while the right hand continues with a melodic line. The third system, starting at measure 38, shows a more complex bass line with chords and a melodic line in the right hand.

Wonya Amane is based on the highlife rhythm, but makes use of the following rhythmic motif, $\frac{2}{4}$ which is played by

the piano in the left hand as a kind of regular beat.

Though the accompaniment is simple and straight forward, it is very effective because of the presence of the motor movement (dance lilt) in it. In effect it uses figurations that represent hand clapping in a way that is reminiscent of traditional performances.

In this analysis, we see African pianism in real focus as the piano is ingeniously used to simulate bell patterns and drum rhythms as if it is a percussive instrument. Though the piano is known everywhere as a Western instrument, Nketia through the employment of creative transformation technique and the concept of African pianism, has creatively made it to behave and sound like an indigenous traditional African instrument. For instance, he succeeds in making it perform the role of a percussive instrument just like the *dawuro* (bell) of his Asante tradition. Thus, in the accompaniment part, one sees the piano hanging onto a basic rhythmic pattern: $\therefore\theta\theta\therefore\theta.\varepsilon\therefore\theta\kappa\varepsilon\therefore\eta\therefore$ etc. over a long stretch of time before changing to play other varied rhythms very briefly. This role in the African context can best be described as time line and it is that which guides the performance from the beginning to the end. Time line here is that which

externalizes the metronomic pulse to which all the instruments listen directly or indirectly in traditional performances. And this is what the composer has employed in his creative art works to give his work an African character.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

It will be evident from the foregoing discussion that the development trajectory of creative transformations in the compositions of Nketia, exemplifies the use of new models to transform the African traditional modes of expression, using techniques that are not frequently used in African traditions (Coping with the challenge of harmonising two different cultures creatively and with artistic ingenuity). It is important to acknowledge that Nketia's knowledge of Western music theory, harmony and counterpoint and composition is profound. Nketia recalls that it was Otto Boateng, a music theorist who voluntarily gave him a copy of a book on harmony written by Steward Macpherson, to study on his own. He found the book so useful that he ordered a copy of another book by the same author, entitled *Melody and Harmony*, and studied it. From this humble beginning, Nketia later earned a scholarship for further studies in London. Since he was very much interested in music, he decided to continue studying Western Music, which he believed, would enhance his knowledge of traditional African Music. His recreation of communal music practices through a minimalist approach to musical form is thus strategic and not borne out of lack of knowledge of European compositional techniques.

The retrieval of traditional music in contemporary modern African art music derives from a reaffirmation of a sense of identity that was stifled during colonial rule. This therefore, represents one important but indirect strategy for ameliorating the effects of the European cultural hegemony that colonial domination helped to engender in Ghana and other parts of Africa.

Nketia's demystification of classical European music practices through recourse to the use of indigenous strategies serves two main purposes. Firstly, this creative approach is aesthetically significant, because it affirmed that the use of adequate European form and the cyclic and judicious application of western harmony resonates well with Nketia's own interpretation of contemporary traditional Akan music; an interpretation that originates, particularly from his mother's mentorship and ethnomusicological research years after.

As shown in my discussion of his works above, the use of simple forms and repetitive patterns; the relation between language and melody and rhythm; employment of call and response patterns, and parallelism as a legitimate harmonic system recur greatly in his works. African pianism, improvisation and

the application of flattened seventh and augmented fourth also occur as compositional resources. The cyclic and minimal application of Western harmony is a technique that resonates positively with an ostinato-driven rhythmic cycle, particularly in the bass part that governs Nketia's musical material. As I also explained above, the choice of Western instruments was often made with a view to making them function as surrogate African instruments. As Nketia himself explains:

The choice of western melodic instruments from the very beginning of my vocation, as a composer was due simply to expediency. I decided to use what was immediately available to me in my contemporary environment, partly because of the difficult problems posed by traditional melodic instruments in terms of their inaccessibility beyond their ethnic boundaries, tuning, range, playing techniques, and partly because of the limitations that these can impose on a contemporary composer who wants to go beyond the creative goals and compositional techniques to which traditional musicians confined themselves in the light of the scope of what was available to them. Additionally, the main thing about my use of the piano in my songs is that sometimes, I use it to embellish (*ngyegyeho*) to embellish, and sometimes use it to support or accompany the song that is, performers interacting through music. (Interview with Nketia on November 10, 2014).

The acceptance of aspects of Western art music as a creative resource through its adoption, modification and the incorporation of African elements is paradoxical in a politically significant manner. The political significance or difference, here, relates more to how one is able to adjust to new things, particularly in this contemporary era where the option to accept or reject exists; unlike the colonial period where things were done under the dictates of the colonial authority. In the colonial regime it was the thing to do but in contemporary times it was an option.

If you seek to apply the white man's method you can do it in your own way. There is nothing to prevent us from borrowing from other cultures. All cultures do that, but they all do it in situations where they are not compelled to do it. Nketia's works in their conception and syntax speak to the unequal power relations that formed the defining equation of colonial domination in Africa. In order not to create the impression that African art music is 'elitist' and can only be enjoyed by particular sections of society, most of his works are relatively simple in texture.

As a music educator, he tries to reach a wide variety of tastes and levels of sophistication—those with short span of attention who are comfortable with small scale pieces or music with verse repeating structures, but not with extended works and those accustomed to the latter. The juxtaposition of African and European musical syntaxes in a manner that symbolically restores the integrity of one and undermines the hegemony of the other resonates with a strong political message. Nketia's statement about why he combines Western and African elements in his

work is particularly noteworthy in this respect. Commenting on why he wrote short, repetitive, fragmentary phrases for Akan and Western instruments, Nketia explained that:

Five years of study and exposure to Western music and musical life in the UK naturally made a great impact on me, but did not diminish my loyalty to my ancestral tradition as far as my own music is concerned. It enabled me not only to compose songs in the traditional style, but also to explore ways of creating meaningful synthesis of the techniques and materials I acquired abroad with those of my own culture. (Interview with Nketia on December 5, 2014).

The three pieces that have been analyzed and discussed in this paper exemplify this conscious effort by Nketia to bridge the gap between the concept of Western music and African music in a bid to preserve his identity as a true African. I conclude with Bela Bartok's description of Hungarian folk songs, which according to him is also true of our Ghanaian traditional songs:

In their small way, they are as perfect as the grandest masterpieces of musical art. They are indeed classical models of the way in which a musical idea can be expressed in all its freshness and shapeliness - in short, in the best possible way, in the briefest possible form with the simplest of means. See Quote from (Nketia 2004: 12).

The vital question, however, is whether up and coming creative artists would have the skill and capacity to promote African art music tradition to any appreciable level as has been started by Nketia and a few other African art composers, like, Gyimah Larbi, Akin Euba and Fela Sowande of Nigeria just to mention a few. This question has become necessary, particularly in this contemporary era when music education appears to be non-existent in the course curriculum of basic schools in Ghana and other African countries. Furthermore, unlike years back, voluntary avenues for training and mentoring are also completely absent from both traditional and urban communities.

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