An analysis of stylistic features in Ronald Ontiri Onchuru's popular music

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Abstract
This paper examines the stylistic features utilized in Ronald Ontiri Onchuru's popular music as he seeks to represent the cognitive reality in the Abagusii society. The article shows that style plays a pivotal role in articulating societal reality through popular music. As such music is regarded as a very powerful medium to an extent that in some societies there have been attempts to control its use. It is powerful at the level of the social group because it facilitates communication which goes beyond words, enables meanings to be shared, and promotes the development and maintenance of individual, group, cultural and national identities. It is powerful at the individual level because it can induce multiple responses – physiological, movement, mood, emotional, cognitive and behavioral. Few other stimuli have effects on such a wide range of human functions. The power of music lies on the language deployed by the artiste to convey the intended message. Consequently, this article examined how Ronald Ontiri Onchuru, popularly known as Bikundo, deploys language in his popular music to foreground various issues in the Abagusii community. Ronald Ontiri Bikundo is one of the popular musicians among the Abagusii of western Kenya. The study was premised on the understanding that style is one of the tools available to any creative artist in articulating issues affecting society. Consequently, it sought to identify and analyse various features of style in Bikundo's popular music and how they are used to bring out diverse thematic concerns in the music. The study delimited itself to the analysis of Bikundo's purposively sampled popular songs. The study relies on Semiotics and Sociological theories. The study reveals that Bikundo uses various styles such as metaphor, symbolism, personification and idiomatic expressions to foreground themes such as HIV/AIDS, hardwork, poverty, and love.

Keywords: communication, cognitive reality, cultural experience, language, popular music, style

Public Interest Statement

Today, the manner in which music is packaged influences consumerism greatly, which mainly means the growth of attractiveness and consumption of goods and services. These offers are greatly influenced by advertising in which music plays a significant role, as well as its presence in all service environments. The language used by musicians plays a part in the choices that consumers have to make. The use of appealing language attracts consumers. Consequently, this article examines how Ronald Ontiri Onchuru popularly known as Bikundo deploys various stylistic features to foreground various issues afflicting the Abagusii society.

Introduction

This article analyses the use of style in Ronald Ontiri Onchuru's music and how it contributes to the overall meaning of his popular music. It is the contention of this article that style plays a critical role in the expression of meaning in any work of art. This implies that for a literary critic to arrive at any meaningful interpretation of any work of art, they must pay attention to the style of such work of art. Therefore, the objective of this article is to examine and analyse how style has been utilized in the selected songs. This is guided by the idea that song, while articulating a people's concerns and shared experiences, employs figurative language. Hence, style becomes the artist's communicative tool with which to foreground the societal issues in the songs. Style, the creative fashioning of language (Mugubi, 2005), differentiates one artist from another. It is what makes Bikundo stand out as one of the finest and most seasoned musicians in the Abagusii region.

While foregrounding the importance of style in literary interpretations, Hawthorn (1995) observes that "Literary works are the only-works which consist largely of language is what one interprets the in 'literary work' in such a way as to include such things as oral poetry and some of the performing arts. It is not surprising therefore that the artists have sought to use language in the construction of theories about literature" (p.51). This observation points to the idea that language, whether in song, poetry or in other forms of art, plays a pivotal role in unraveling the meaning(s) of such work of art. Language is the prime aspect in any work of art that is subjected to interpretation. Consequently, the language of any work of art is intertwined with style and hence this article adopts an interpretive approach while examining various stylistic features in the selected songs. Style addresses the specialized use of language to elicit interesting ways of communication in Bikundo's songs. Further, it offers insights into how he seeks to present the social reality in his songs.

Ngara (1982) laments that students of Literature in Africa and elsewhere have concentrated on narration of themes and characters of works of art at the expense of the aesthetic aspects of Literature. He, therefore, urges for a more balanced view towards the analysis of form and content. He argues that a work of art must be analysed and evaluated in terms of aesthetically sound set parameters without disregarding the political, social and moral issues raised in the work. Olembo (1986) observes that style plays a critical role in the understanding of poetry. She goes ahead to analyze the utilization of various stylistic features in a poem such as alliteration, rhythm, stress and how they can be manipulated both for aesthetic purposes and for meaning. Her assertion is significant to this study since it not only illuminates the aspects of style but also shapes our understanding on the use of style and its role in works of literature such as poetry.

Leech and Short (1981) recognize that linguistic analysis is more important in the study of poetry than prose. They posit that the poet, more obviously than the prose writer, does interesting things with language. And if one wanted to find a definition of poetry that went deeper than the run-of–the mill dictionary definition, it might be that whereas in poetry, aesthetic effect cannot be separated from the creative manipulation of the linguistic code, in prose it tends to reside more in other factors. Leech and Short demonstrate how poetry is rich in terms of its aesthetic effects due to the language

used. Poets manipulate language in order to be able to achieve maximum effects in the process of communication. They also make most use of the available paralinguistic items to attain a heightened form of communication. Consequently, the two critics proceed to argue that in doing so, the poet does "interesting things" with language. It is with this in mind that this article examines Bikundo's use of style in the selected songs. It is the article's contention that the manner in which Bikundo employs language in his songs enables him to pass his message(s) to the audience with simply and easily.

Brief overview of critical studies on Kenyan popular music

From rural villages to urban hotspots, popular Kenyan music continues to change with the times. Kenya's popular music scene has experienced a steady evolution from the early days of colonialism to independence to the present day. The playing field has expanded considerably from the live stage and radio to include television, internet and the mobile phone, as avenues through which music is consumed. It is worth noting that scholarly studies on popular music in Kenya take ethnic stance with majority of the studies concentrated on the Agikuyu ethnic community. While examining the music of Joseph Kamaru, Hervé Maupeu in "L'intellectuel populaire et l'imaginaire politique: Le cas de Joseph Kamaru" in *Songs and Politics in Eastern Africa* observes that Kamaru blends well with the audience due to the relevance and aptness of his lyrics in the Kenyan socio-political terrain and his sensitivity to language. Maupeu examines how through music, Kamaru voiced various political concerns among the Agĩkũyũ in post-independence Kenya. The same political inclination is observed by Maina wa Mutonya in "Joseph Kamaru: Contending Narrations of Kenya's Politics through Music" in *Cultural production and Social Change in Kenya* where he focuses on the "ambiguity of the musician throughout the changing faces of politics in Kenya" (p.27). Maina examines Kamaru's music against the backdrop of the political terrain in Kenya since independence from Kenyatta's days to the Moi regime.

Maupeu and Maina (2007) argue that Kamaru pays particular attention to his language and has to operate through double edged meanings and ambiguities to capture the ambivalences of society and to keep the fangs of the state away. They further observe that his music depicts an appropriation of the rich repertoire of Gikuyu customs and traditions that are avenues through which he aptly captures the ambivalences, and contradictions of postcolonial Kenya. Although the two critics point out that Kamaru's music depicts his sensitivity to language, they pay much attention to the political tomfoolery embedded in his songs. They both observe that his 'music brings to the fore issues of gender relations, identity, power, and socio-economic tensions in East Africa. Taking a cue from the two critical analyses on Kamaru, this study investigates how Bikundo manipulates his language to articulate the various issues that affect society adequately.

Githiora (2004) argues that the music genre should continue to be studied as both an important music form, and a newly emerged sociocultural discourse in urban Kenya. He argues that this should be done through its creative and articulate use of Gĩkũyũ, Swahili, and English languages and to some extent 'Sheng', an urban Swahili dialect, along with a "call" and "response" singing pattern often accompanied by the adept incorporation of mainstream religious musical practices and discourses in recreating Gĩkũyũ cultural institutions. *Mũgithi* can be also be considered an embodiment of a counter-language found in such genres as rap, toast, signifying, narrativizing comedy, drama and song, which are all bound up in one music genre. It's in this light that the current study sought to investigate how Bikundo's popular music engages particular linguistic patterns to highlight certain issues in the Abagusii community.

Kuria (2003) points out that "Gĩkũyũ music is classified into genres and which are age specific and sometimes gender specific" (p.1). Kuria examines Muthunguci and its role in the identity construction of a Kikuyu as a sexual self-operating in a society that was both restrictive and liberal in handling matters of sexuality. In his analysis, he focuses on how form and content are interlinked and pays special attention to the language of Muthunguci and the ways in which the artist borrows from the

environment to come up with metaphors that ensured only those well versed in the language and mores of the people could understand and participate in the creation and performance of the genre. In the process the Kikuyu not only chronicled their history and culture but also transmitted the same through well-known participatory teaching and learning methodologies such as question and answer; testing, monitoring and evaluation; reward and motivation amongst others. Kuria's insights will greatly inform the analysis of how Bikundo employs various features of style in his music not only to foreground issues affecting his community but also to chronicle its history. Nyairo and Ogude (2005)" argue that:

> Part of the power of popular music is to be found in the way it congeals into a set of conventions, thereby embodying a tradition. Popular music achieves this in two ways. First, through the themes and concerns of the songs, we hear of the issues and events that constitute a people's experiences. In other words, popular music documents a people's history. Secondly, popular music gets woven into the soundtrack of events, moments and experiences; it is mnemonic and therefore certain songs carry the capacity to make one recall a particular place or specific events. The history of a community can, therefore, be told from or through that community's collection of popular songs (pp.1-2).

The above conclusion by Nyairo and Ogude points to the idea that style can be used creatively through song to tell a community's history, issues affecting society and provide imagined solutions to challenges facing society. In the light of this observation, this study examines how Bikundo, through song, uses features of style to address challenges facing the Abagusii community.

Simatei (2008) argues that Kalenjin popular music designates "that particular form of popular music—whether secular dance music or gospel music—that consciously projects, redefines and revalorizes the discourses of "Kalenjinness" (p. 2). He, thus, points out that the music has been used as a tool to promote the ethnic agenda among members of the Kalenjin community. Simatei's postulations are corroborated by Kiprotich Sang in "Reading Kalenjin Popular Music as a Gem of Ethnic Violence" who points out that popular musician in the Kalenjin community urge their members to jealously guard their ethnic identity even if this involves chasing other ethnic communities from their land. Without desperaging on the views of the two scholars, the current study examines how Bikundi employs various features of style to foreground particular thematic concerns such ethnic identity and cohesion in Abagusii society.

Brief overview of studies on Abagusii popular music

Studies on Abagusii popular music are sparse. The pioneering studies have mainly been undertaken, not within the literary domain, but historical, sociolinguistics and musical canons. Nyamwaka (2014) examines thematic concerns and dance patterns in both the traditional and the contemporary musical compositions. He observes that the content and dance patterns in traditional and modern musical compositions, respectively, reflect the social realities of their time. Nyamwaka's study, though not linguistic in nature, is important to us because of the way it dwells on the dynamic nature of both the context and the oral compositions and performances of the Abagusii. Equally, Nyamwaka's (2014) interest in dance patterns is akin to our interest in the changing performance techniques in the oral art forms among the Abagusii. Further, with his focal point being the historical development of music content, dance, and accompaniment in both traditional and contemporary music among Abagusii, Nyamwaka's study provides the present study with a crucial comparative model for mounting a literary examination of oral art forms among Abagusii. It is nevertheless true that the two studies above, being historical in their conception and outlook, are rightly least concerned with the literariness of the genres, besides not being sufficiently intensive in analysing forms to yield tangible models for studying literary trends in the oral literature of Abagusii. The present study, being purely literary, is well suited to provide

tangible models for the study of literary techniques in Abagusii popular music.

Examining the selected popular music of Tabby Okeng'o and Abana Sungusia from critical discourse analysis perspective, Ombongi (2018) focused on on how language has been used to portray men and women among the Abagusii. Ombongi (2018) revealed that linguistic devices such as parallelism, epipher and synaesthea among other are used in showing the simiraties and differences between men and women in society. While Ombogi's study analyses the popular musicians from a linguistic perspective, the current study seeks to present a literary appreciation of Bikundo's popular music among the Abagusii.

While analyzing context and symbolism in African Orature, Wakoko and Orina (2018) examine Henry "Man Pepe" Sagero's song *Omoika bw'omosiki* (The Spirit of Music). Through their analysis, Wakoko and Orina (2018) concluded that the musician, on the one hand, appropriates symbols conceived in the traditional context into contemporary situations to convey messages with a contemporary bearing, as well as the old values that may have a contemporary relevance. On the other hand, there are symbols that have been conceived within the contemporary reality and they are therefore totally new and uniquely suited to the modern realities. While examining Bikundo's popular music, the current study was illuminated by Wakoko's and Orina's (2018) findings particularly on how musicians deploy symbols to foreground various issues in society through their music.

Stylistic features in Bikundo's popular music

As observed, stylistic devices are used to capture the audience's attention and to make the songs interesting to listen to. Bikundo, for example, deploys beguiling titles such as *Nkere Gianchandire* (That Troubling me), *Echirani* (Neigbour) and *Speed Governor* in order to arouse the curiosity of the audience. In his songs, the artist makes use of various stylistic devises such as metaphor, irony, euphemism, repetition, and alliteration among others to pass the intended message and to meaning more forceful and emphatic to the listeners. The following is the analysis of some of the features of style as used in the selected songs:

Metaphor

Metaphor, which is pervasive in everyday language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), plays a vital role in human thought, reasoning and understanding. Lakoff and Turner (1989) argue that metaphors are crucial ways that human beings employ to conceptualize abstract concepts. According to Barcelona and Valenzuela (2005), a metaphor is a cognitive mechanism in which one experiential domain is partially mapped so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first. Aksan (2006) also argues that the structure of a conceptual metaphor consists of mappings between source domain and the target domain. The domain of human being, therefore, also transfers the semantic aspects of human beings in relation to other persons as pointed out in this study. A metaphor, thus, is a creative way of describing one thing by referring to another which has the qualities that one wants to express.

Bikundo makes use of various human metaphors in his popular songs to illuminate human characteristics in society such as impressions, attitudes, conditions, occupations and human conditions such as insanity, foolishness, disability and poverty. Bikundo in the song *Obwanchani* (love) laments that his critics negatively label him *richara* (a fool). This labeling is in reference to the physical qualities of his wife which apparently do not appeal to his critics. Bikundo is, thus, disparaged by his critics who consider him a foolish person for falling in love with a person who does not conform in terms of physical attributes. Bikundo, however, dismisses those who loathe him by claiming that *eyarare otari koria tegokororera (*the pepper which you do not take should not irritate you). Bikundo's assertion authenticates the proverbial metaphor that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.

In the song *Obwanchani* (love), Bikundo compares his guitarist, Nyaoga, with a king when he sings "*Nyaoga n' ekingi* (Nyaoga is a king)". Here, Bikundo, praises his guitarist, Nyaoga, for his prowess, competence, experience and highly specialised skills in playing a guitar. Bikundo also notes that

his guitarist appeals at all times which is in line with the tenure of a king who reigns until either death. Bikundo also attributes the popularity of his song *Obwanchani* (love) to the guitarist's hilarious skills as he considers him to be the source of stability, admiration, inspiration and a symbol of continuity. Nyaoga, therefore, is a symbol of admiration to Bikundo's fans. Bikundo further notes that his guitarist is unequalled in the region. This is a compliment which appeals to Bikundo's audience who marvels at his highly skilled crew and thus cherishes his song *Obwanchani* (love).

The human condition of disability is used to conceptualise a human being as depicted in *Omonto n' oborema* ('a human being is disability) in the song *Obwanchani* (love). In his music, Bikundo employs the metaphor to beseech his wife, Kwamboka, to be committed in their matrimony and to ignore malicious people who compare him with *oborema* (disability). Disability is an impairment which causes restrictions on a person's ability to take part in what is considered normal in society (Woodin, 2006). Woodin (2006) further argues that disabled people are demeaned because of their limitations to take part in most activities undertaken by those people who are considered normal. The metaphor is, therefore, appropriately used to illustrate how *ebirema* (disabled people) are marginalised in society. Bikundo sings that malicious people conceptualize him as *ekerema* (disabled) which signifies that Bikundo is stigmatised in his society for lacking the material capacity to care for his wife, Kwamboka, in accordance with societal expectations.

Bikundo uses the metaphor *Omonto n' obotaka* (a human being is poverty) to jide his wife, Kwamboka, to uphold their matrimony despite their current state of poverty. Grusky and Kanbur (2006) posit that in the dominant western definition of poverty, levels of income are used to measure poverty. The poor are defined as those who fall below a given income or consumption level (Lipton & Ravallion, 1993). The poor are, therefore, associated with deficiency in financial and material worth. Socially constructed terms are normally designed to derogate the people equated with *obotaka* (poverty) which include: lazy, parasitic and animalistic. Bikundo rebukes his inability to materially care for his wife. Underwood (2009) observes that falling in love causes a physical attraction that motivates one to go out of their way to provide the needs of the lover. Bikundo, therefore, endeavours to implore his wife not to abandon him despite his inability to materially provide and care for her. He is optimistic that he would be able to meet the material needs of his wife in the future.

Symbolism

Symbolism has been described as the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. An action, person, place, word, or object can all have a symbolic meaning based on their usage in a particular work of art. In using symbols, Bikundo not only expands the possibilities in terms of meaning but also heightens interest for his songs from listeners. In the same vein, the artist foregrounds certain moods or emotions through the use of symbolism.

In the song *Speed Governor*, Bikundo uses symbols to represent various ideas in society:

Abagaka beka speed governor	Men wear speed governor
Abang'ina mwensi gaki siba emechibi	Women wear safety belts
Abaka mwensi siba chisese	All men tame your dogs
Abang'ina mwensi mosieke ebibiita	All women close your gates
Ng'ora ng'ora speed governor	Slowly slowly speed governor
Ng'ora ng'ora gosibete emechibbi	Try your safet belt slowly
Ng'oora ng'ora ebara nenkora	Slowly Slowly put it on
Ebitongo mbiroo speed governor	There are potholes
Sieka etamosi	Close the thermos
Echae tendeka	To preserve the tea

Enyamoreo gaki yachire   There is HIV/AIDS

Bikundo tells men to wear speed governors, safety belts and to tame their dogs. Similarly, the singer tells women to close their gates and thermos so that the tea inside does not get cold. The items, speed governor, safety belts, and thermos, are used symbolically to implore the general public to engage in safe sex. Bikundo reminds his listeners of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and therefore the need to take care not to engage in unsafe sexual practices.

In the song *Speed Governor*, Bikundo symbolically warns of vehicles without seat belts or speed governors. They look beautiful from outside but inside there are no seats, just like a ripe fruit that is attractive from outside but inside it has a warm. The singer means that there are people who are infected with HIV/AIDS, who seem alright from outside but inside them is the disease:

Chigari chiachire	There are vehicles
chitabwati emechibi	without safety belts
echinde nchibwati	Others don't have
Speed governor	speed governor.
Isiko nekieni	beautiful from outside,
ime birogo mbiyo	no seats inside
Rotunda ritobu	A ripe fruit
ndire nerikonde	There is a worm
Isiko ribariri	Ripe from Outside
ime rigundo but	Spoilt inside

Items used as symbols are drawn from the ordinary and common environment where both the musicians and listeners freely interact. In this regard, items used as symbols depend on each and are known to the listeners because they are often used in the public transport sector. The transference of knowledge of how items are used in everyday life and their symbolism, in human sexuality, underlines the meaning.

In the song *Sweet Sweet Banana*, Bikundo uses the banana as a symbol of family continuity and togetherness. In the song, performers led by their soloist (Bikundo) bid farewell to the beloved couple which has join another stage in their life. The symbols are used in the song "Sweet Sweet Banana" to underline the social transformation those who get married undergo as they start a new life and to symbolize happiness, togetherness, joy and vitality as indicated in the lines below:

Sweet sweet banana	Sweet sweet banana
egetenga kie ritoke	a bush of bananas
Sweet sweet banana	Sweet sweet banana
egetenga kie ritoke	a bush of bananas
Makori ekero okonywoma	Makori when you'll marry
ondangerie ngokobe	ask me for escort
Makori ekero okonywoma	Makori when you'll marry
ondangerie ngekobe	ask me for escort

The song romanticizes the bride and groom as they move to make a new family and encourages togetherness symbolized by banana bushes. Often, the song is sung during marriage celebrations as people make merry, displaying their feeling and attitude towards marriage. The facial expressions, gestures, body movement, dances and paralinguistic features are all in harmony with the happy mood during this occasion.

Appropriation of the Dirge

Finnegan (1970) avers that dirges are melancholic songs sung in honor of a deceased. Dirges are also a means of praising the dead person. He is honored and mourned as the general links between the past and present; the living and dead are brought out in stock themes in the dirge. Ojaide (2004) observes that a "dirge is a poem that deals with death" (p.69). Songs that are essential to the burial and memorial rites in different communities in Africa form the dirge. Thus, dirge performances become useful avenues to let out pent emotions that could easily be harmful to health of the bereaved.

In the dirge song *Nyang'au*, Bikundo praises and exalts the good deeds of his late friend, Dismas Nyang'au Onsoti, known in music circles as Nyang'au y' egetonto. Nyangau introduced Bikundo to music and he was part of his music band till his untimely demise. Bikundo sings:

Ayeee aye baba o bee	Ooooh, Ouch
Baba ominto Nyang'au orarire	Nyangua has slept
Baba ominto nyang'au yegetonto	The forest tiger
Baba ominto nere nyakeboko	He is the tough one
Baba ominto PHD man	He had a PhD
Baba ominto orenge omoteri	He was a musician
Baba ominto orenge kobugia obokano	Playing the lyre
Baba ominto togatera nere	We sung together
Baba ominto tware kobugia obokano nere	Playing the lyre
Baba ominto buna bono orarire	He has now slept
Baba ominto bikundo mbirero inde	Bikundo I am mourning

Bikundo pays tribute to his late friend and benefactor in music. The song shows the pain sustained by the bereavement of an intimate friend. The bereaved feels the loss greatly because no other friend or person can fill the vacuum occasioned by death. Bikundo is worried over the death of this companion, which he euphemistically refers to resting. He shows the intimacy that existed between the bereaved and the deceased when he mentions how they used to sing and play lyre together. This proximity is compared with a clustered seed of plantain. The conjoined plantain suggests the inseparability of the two friends. Only death can separate them. Though the song shows helplessness and sympathy of those left behind by the deceased, Bikundo uses it to console the bereaved. In spite this theme, the bereaved are given hope that all is not lost. This theme is commonly described or compared with a cow without a tail. It is believed that God, who drives flies from a tailless cow, will always be there to help the bereaved in times of need.

Idiomatic Expressions

Bikundu enriches his music through the use of idiomatic expressions and wise sayings. These stylistic devices not only summarize his message so that it can be slotted into a definite tune and length but also bring out the message vividly and in a powerful way. Thus, terse blocks of ideas acquire a notable degree of permanence in our mind as the audience while listening to his music. In the song *Chichokora* (Street Urchins), Bikondo says "Egetinkinye ekeng'aini/kerigiae oboundi keagache/embura egotia gesoie mwaye" (A clever weaverbird/will look for grass to build his nest during the dry season/ and hides in it during the rainy season). In this Bikundo utilizes the traditional idiomatic expression to rally the people to prepare for adversities in the future. Like the weaverbird which prepares for the coming for rain by building its nest during the dry season, people should not wait until the time of vulnerability then start running around, instead, they should make effort towards making themselves comfortable before disaster strikes. In other words, the community should not be caught by surprise but be able to predictably work towards averting distater. In order to extent the image of preparedness in society,

Bikundo reminds his listeners that it is not always that things will be rosy in life. In the same song, he warns that people should be prepared for various eventualities in life since there will come a time when the rosy life will encounter unforeseen difficulties.

Personification

This is a special kind of comparison, closely related to metaphor that gives life of human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract ideas (Charles Kebaya, Boaz Owino, Martin Njoroge and Peter Mose 2020). The comparison may be explicit or implicit, an animate figure may represent an abstraction or idea, or may project as an acting person emotions or concerns that are internal to human experience. The animals, plants and other inanimate objects like stones impersonating a human being can do all that a normal human being can do. They possess all the qualities belonging to a human being. For example, they can eat, sleep and speak. In the song *Echiarani* (Neighbour)*,* Bikundo sings:

> Inche tindi konyeboria bwone emenyete
> Chirani esese temanyeti gose ntoetaine
> Chirani esese yao emanyete rituko inkoria enyama
> Rituko nkoria omena esese yao emanyete
> Rituko nkoria esukuma esese yao emanyete
> Ebudget yane nyomba esese yao emanyete
>
> My neighbour your dog stays at my home
> I don't ask it
> My neighbour the dog does not know we are enemies
> Your dog knows when I eat meat
> The day I eat omena your dog knows
> The day I eat kales your dog knows
> My budget in the house your dog knows

Bikundo personifies the neighbour's dog thereby amplifying their differences. The dog is given the human attribute of knowing to enable listeners to easily connect with the ideas which are described in the song. In this case, the trivial things such as knowing the type of meal, impacts listeners as it showcases a non-human entity endowed with a human attributes. In this regard, Bikundo suggests that it's important for neighbors to iron out their differences amicably and live harmonious without always checking over their shoulders. In the same song, a hen is given human qualities:

> Minto mwanyagetinge engoko terikweba
> Minto mwanyagetinge engoko terikobisa
> Minto mwanyagetinge engoko terigetoti
>
> Our people from Gusii a hen does not forget
> Our people from Gusii a hen does not hide
> Our people from Gusii a hen does not shy off

By personifying the hen's emotional abilities such as shying off, forgetting and hiding, Bikundo not only appeals to the listeners' emotions but also forges a deeper connection to his listeners and concretizes his subject matter in their minds.

Conclusions

This article set out to examine how Ronald Ontiri Onchuru, also known as Bikundo, uses style to articulate social concerns in the Abagusii society in his popular music. The article noted that though his songs are of fair length, they canvas a number of issues affecting society such as poverty, dysfunctional families, social cohesion, HIV/AIDS and issues to do with youth and unemployment. The article noted that the message in the songs is, however, enhanced by the language that the popular musician deploys. The study established that Bikundo's subtle use of various styles, such as metaphor, use of symbolism, appropriation of dirge, personification, use of idiomatic expressions and wise sayings, which other than their palpable decoration of the structure, condense his message in a more memorable and meaningful way. The images and symbols he uses challenge his listeners to think of the underlying message. His intricate combination of various aspects of style and linguistic devices give the music an appealing power and a compelling force in the Abagusii society.

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