

**APPRECIATING IGBO ART SOLO MUSIC OF OLD AS A GUIDE FOR NEW
GENERATION COMPOSITIONS**

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Abstract

This work creates awareness on the practice of art music in Eastern part of Nigeria with emphasis on the solo – piano structure of the art. Using quantitative and qualitative analysis, it discusses to an extent the generational growth of the art. It appreciates the efforts of the older composers who have set a sort of standard for the younger ones to follow. It also recognizes the efforts and actions of the younger generation composers in continuing the work of the old. On another note, it observes the unavailability of a tangible experiencing of the old generation of composers by the new specifically through their physical works rather than news and stories about them. It also observes that a certain gap needs to be filled in the area of collaboration and mentorship among composers especially among composers of unequal status to enable effective and beneficial mentoring. This work recommends that the young composers need effective guidance from the old. Two samples of solo pieces from old and new were taken and analyzed. Above all, it recommends performance as one of the best ways to appreciate and give life to works of art. To that effect, it advises composers to create works that will be functional and relevant to the situations of society.

Keywords: Art solo music, composers, old generation, new generation, collaboration.

Introduction

Over the years, music has gone through series of evolution. Music is embodied with life activities, experiences and styles of living; and since these things continue to evolve with time, music as well as its appreciation continues to evolve too. In Western music history, the generational changes have been systematically established in periods or eras making it easy for people or scholars to observe, identify and follow up the rebirth and evolution of

music. The western musical periods in history covered from the era of plain chants down through polyphonic music, fugue and counterpoint, art songs etc.

In the spirit of continuity, lots of musical tradition developed out of influence from a former. This influence could work in different ways. A composer may be influenced by a particular feature from a musical tradition that proves to be so valuable and he may want to emphasize this feature by developing it further or simply continuing its usage. Historically, it is recorded that some composers were influenced by the works of their senior colleagues or contemporaries. In other words, a musical tradition could be perceived to be provocative in a negative way especially to the taste of a composer which will influence the composer to break away completely from that tradition. This is when we hear words like rebirth, revolution etc.

Art music in Nigeria has taken a deep root; it has progressed in content and context. It has also taken different identities especially as approached and influenced by Nigerians of different ethnic nationalities. This means that notable composers have also emerged overtime. The works of these composers have qualitatively and quantitatively enriched the Nigerian music repertoire and can be regarded as Nigerian art music by the virtue of the composer or by the virtue of the language the music speaks.

The Foundation

Nigeria has produced lots of scholars who have researched and composed African art music. Notable scholars ranging from T.K.E. Phillips, Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, Samuel Akpabot, Meki Nzewi, Lazarus Ekwueme, Okechukwu Ndubuisi, Adam Fiberesima, Joshua Uzoigwe, Dan Agu, Christian Onyeji, Alvan – Ikoku Nwamara, David Aina, Ayo Oluranti, to mention but a few have written articles and creative works on art music. It is important to note that art music was not originally African. According to Onyeji;

Although art music has become significant part of Africa's history and art, art music still remains alien to most people in Africa. He then went ahead to establish that the audience of art music in Nigeria has been somewhat exclusive, while the music is regarded as reserve for the elite class who align with its music for social sophistication etc.

This indirectly translates that a listener of art music should be ready to listen for more than just sounds for fuller rewards. This goes on to establish that an art musician needs more than just a talent to make art music; it requires a sort of professional skill necessary for research, composing or arranging. According to Omojola B. (1995), he opined that;

Although it was through the Church that the concept of music as a contemplative art received widespread popularity in Nigeria, it was left to the efforts of formally trained composers and musicologists to forge new idioms and styles in their works to develop a modern tradition of Nigerian Art Music. While the earliest of them, T.K.E. Phillips, started composing in the 1920s followed by Fela Sowande in 1940, it was not until the early 1960s that several Nigerian composers, who chose to compose in the idiom of European classical music, emerged. Receiving their initial training in the Church, many of them later went to Europe and the United States to study music at a conservatoire or university.

Adegbite in Ekewenu (2008) also stated that the “the history of art music in Nigeria dates back to the first half of nineteenth century, when Christian missionaries set their feet on Nigerian soil. It is interesting to also note that art music in Nigerian started as choral music for churches and schools. According to Nzewi in Onyeji (2019), “Music literacy (then) (solfa notation in particular) became expedient for the Missionary as well as the colonial educational objectives and content.” This is a clear indication that art music has really developed overtime in Nigeria. This is because majority of art musicians now emerged from an initial church music practice. So, one can say that the emergence of the missionaries gave rise to art music in Nigeria.

Progressively, this study deals specifically with art solo music: a resultant development of Nigerian art music. Just like the traditional art song of western music, art solo music of Africa especially in Nigeria has taken the same form of a solo line, with a carefully - composed lyrics written over a piano accompaniment. Folk songs have also been arranged to this form.

The Appreciation

To appreciate in this context according to Merriam-webster dictionary is to “recognize the full worth of.” Advanced oxford dictionary defined appreciation as “a written assessment of an artist or piece of work, typically a favourable one.” As an uncountable noun according to Longman Dictionary of contemporary English, “appreciation is a pleasure you feel when you realize something is good, useful or well done; it is also an understanding of the importance or meaning of something. Etymologically according to Oxford languages, appreciation comes from a Latin verb *appretiare* which means to appraise. As a matter of fact, this work embodies a rounded understanding and concept of appreciation. It recognizes a full worth of the works of older Nigerian art music composers in relation to how tangibly relevant they have been to the new generation of composers.

Appreciating art is more than a mere enjoyment of the resultant audio, visuals or imaginative results of a performance. It requires a second mind to understand beyond ordinary and see values there-in. To appreciate properly, one needs to understand holistically. In appreciating Igbo solo art music whether of old or new generations of composers, there is need for one to have been actively involved in the art to a reasonable extent especially in performance. The researcher has repeatedly performed lots of master pieces of notable art composers of which some include Agu's Adamma nke m, Nwamara's Egwu Anuri, O' Ndubuisi's Odenjinji, Onyeji's Giri Giri and Uzoigwe's Tuzu. The performance process was a great step towards appreciating these works. More to performance is an intentional motive to learn from the works too. So the appreciating performer does not just perform to enjoy the aesthetics. With an open mind he or she enjoys the piece, tries to understand the composer's mood and intention, learns from the work, analyzes the works as well as criticize them.

The Current Concern

The Igbo Art Solo music is one of the identities Nigerian Art music has taken. Composers like Prof. Onyeji, O. Ndubuisi, Prof. A. O. Nwamara to mention but a few have contributed immensely to the continuous development of the repertoire of the above mentioned genre. They have made it possible for the current generation of students to look up to something, lay hands on something and experience something. There is no doubt, that a good number of students – turned composers who have studied under them were greatly influenced by these already existing works. It is also of a great concern that this tradition be sustained. The idea of sustaining the Igbo art solo music is not far from that of Igbo folk music. This is simply because in the current times, the urge to document and preserve the Igbo folk songs has made the folk songs adapt the form of art song. Nwamara (2017) has also said a lot in an article poised at “repackaging” the Igbo folk songs for global acceptability. It has been noted earlier the invaluable contributions that have been made by great composer and arrangers in keeping alive Igbo art solo music through compositions and arrangements.

How to Grow Quantitatively and Qualitatively

The growth of a work of art lies in its ability to keep living because growth occurs only when there is life. There is need for a deliberate action be taken to set the art in a continuous quantitative and qualitative motion. In as much as the creation of art is a natural phenomenon and continues to happen even without a human activity, there is still need for intentional activities in creating a solid foundation relevant for subsequent intentional and unintentional art to build on.

The researcher however calls for few other intentional aspects to be considered to keep in continuous growth the quantitative and qualitative values of this musical genre. These aspects include:

a) Rigorous post compositional activities

Post compositional activity can be in form of performance. Continuous performance of an art work poses to be the most practical way to keep it alive. Other post compositional activities include video or audio recording of the performances for future references, publishing of the collections just as mentioned in Nwamara (2017) etc.

b) Contextual composition

Apart from preserving some norms and values, it will be beneficial to compose to suit a series of life activity. In this way, compositions will be intentionally made to be functional in the real world and not just for academic purposes. With such values, they could be adapted by movie makers, story writers, event planners and any other stake holder in the position to make the choice. Above all, the activities that require them will seek them.

c) Collaboration between Composers

Team work between composers of unequal standards and equal standards are called for. To put it straight, collaboration between a teacher and student, a colleague and another, a mentor and a mentee, the list goes on. Every kind of art work has its kind of ingenuity whether personal or collaborative. There is even more beauty and when ideas merge from two different creative minds especially when they are approaching from the sides of professionalism or functional experience.

Though in a way, something has been done in this aspect however in a way different from what researcher is proposing. For instance, there has been a culture of collaboration in the paper/booking writing/publishing culture of the academics where a senior and senior, a senior and junior or a junior and junior colleague co – author an article or a book. A typical example is the case of:

The Soloist's companion Volume II by Alvan – Ikoku Nwamara published 2011 in Awka, Nigeria by Mount Camel Publishers with contribution of indigenous folk songs from his colleagues namely Agatha Onwuekwe, Elizabeth Obielozie, Nnamdi – Onuorah Oguno and Chineze Ezenwafor who was a student at the time.

However, the researcher seeks a situation that involves different composers, arrangers and collectors to be actively involved in producing such a work originally through collection, arrangements and compositions as opposed to just collectors and a composer case. It is obvious that some composers possess multiple gifts to effectively arrange and compose but it is still different when different capable heads come together if not for any other reason, for variety sake. Variety is a special ‘ingredient’ in arts’ ‘cooking.’

Some people are better vocal composers than others as well as some are better orchestrators, accompaniment arrangers or even lyricists than others. When these all come together, a genuine art will surely be born.

The researcher has for the sake of practical illustration chosen to show a solo piece titled Egwu Oyoko. This composition came as a result of experience from a thorough appreciation of earlier works of the pioneer Igbo art solo music composers as mentioned above as well as a bit illustration of some of the points made above mainly of collaboration (among equals) and contextualization. It is also an evidence to show that the art lives on;

- In providing modern materials for movies, theatre houses, concert halls, live events etc.
- In Providing materials for performers
- To illicit appreciation for Igbo creative content all over the world.
- In creating an alternative musical culture for the youths other than hip hop.
- In contributing to the growing repertoire of Igbo art music.

To set a record straight, the work being presented has not proven to be superior to the already existing works of art. Actually, it took the previous works for this to exist. However, the researcher continues to appreciate and acknowledge the ingenuity of the old and has seen the reason for the old to continue influencing the new. This work has set out to intentionally create the awareness that;

- The new generation exists
- The new generation needs help
- There is need for new generation and old generation to integrate
- There is need for new generations to integrate as well
- The art should be alive in people than in the papers.

Umeugochukwu, R. I. & Nwamara, A. O.

An Igbo Art Solo Piece; Egwu Oyoko

EGWU OYOKO

Music by: Raph Umeh
Piano accompt by: Gerald Eze
(27th August, 2014)

Allegro ♩ = 130

Allegro ♩ = 130

O buo-nye n'a - kpo-chi-gha m'a - zu? O buo-nye

7
n'a - kpo-chi-gha m'a - zu? A chom i - je nam - ba l'e - gwu ka m gba b'e-gwu e, e -

13
1. gwui-be m n'a- gba. 2. gba. E-gwuo-yo-k'o - yo-ko, e-gwue-jie-men -

19
ga la e-gwue - jia- m'o - ko-so, o-nye g'a buo - ko-so? I-ma-na

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2

25

chi m ke-lu m bua m'i - j'e - gwu o-bu-ro -d'i - je m n'e - je n'o-bu so e- gwu, o -so m_bu so e-

32

gwu, a -ru m_bu so e- gwu o-nye g'a - gba-na-ri m n'e - gwu chi m nye-lu m n-gwa-nu

38

pu-ta k'a-nyi nwa-le... o-so, i - je, e- gwu, n- kwa,

44

te-be ya zo-ba ya, we-be ya, se-ken - se, se-ken - se, e-gwun - yo-li

(The singer takes this time to express herself in elaborate dance a bit longer than written and resumes singing at her own convenience)

50

se-ken - se, e gwuo-yo-ko se-ken - se, i - je! i ma na e-gwu e-

56

lie_ m'i - si, I ma na e-gwu a - so gbue mo, u-kwue-gwu m a-ka-li-sia, a bum nwa

62

b'u - zo e-gwu, e - ji m ya n'e - m'o-nu, o buo-ke chi m nye-lu m i - ye...

rit.

68

O buo-nye n'a - kpo-chi-gha m'a- zu?. Ra-pu m ka m gba b'e-gwu chi m

accel.

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4

74

nye-lu mo, n die-nyi m kwa-do_ m ka m gba be - gwu chi m nye-lu mo, di g'a - nu m

80

g'a - fu m n'o - b'e-gwu chi m nye-lu mo, n-ne m ra - pu m ka m gba b'e-gwu chi m

86

nye-lu mo n-na m ra - pu m ka m gba b'e - gwu chi m nye-lu mo_ do

92

O buo-nye n'a - kpo-chi-gha m'a - zu e-bem no-zi n'u - n'e - gwu, e-gwu m a - na-ba go nuo

99

e - gwu m e - bi - li - g'o - ku n'u - l'e - gwu a - yam-ma, a - yam-ma e

104

a - yam-ma a - yam - ma e a - yam - ma n-kwa!

5

Igbo texts of the Igbo Art Solo Music	English Translations
O bu onye n'akpochigha m azu? (2 times) times A choo m ije na mbala egwu ka m gbaba egwu ibe m n'agba.	Who calls me back? (2 times) I want to go to the dance arena to dance with my peers.
Egwu oyoko oyoko	Oyoko dance
Egwu e ji eme ngala	A dance of pride
Egwu e ji ama okoso	A dance to determine the best
Onye g'abu okoso?	Who will be the best?
I mana Chi m kelu m bua m ije egwu o bunadi ije m na – eje n'obu so egwu	I was created and adorned as “ije egwu” (dance walk) even my walk is dance
Oso m bu so egwu	My run is dance
Aru m bu so egwu	My body is dance
Onye ga-agbanari m n'egwu Chi m nyelu m? Ngwanu puta k'anyi nwalee!	Come, let us compete if you can beat me in my God given dance
Oso!	Running!
Ije!	Walking!
Egwu!	Dance
Nkwa!	Music
Tebe ya!	Dance it
Zoba ya!	Match it
Webe ya!	Dance it!
Sekense!	Sekense!
Egwu nyoli sekense	Nyoli dance, sekense
Egwu oyoko sekense, ije!	Oyoko dance, sekense
I mana egwu erie m isi, I mana egwu atogbue mo!	This dance has taken over me, I have really enjoyed this dance
Ukwu egwu m akalisia	My dance steps are the best
Abu m nwa mbuzo egwu	I am the lead dancer
E ji m ya na eme onu	I am proud of it
O bu oke Chi m nyelu m, iye!	It is a gift from my God, iye!
Obu onye na akpochigha m azu?	Who calls me back?
Rapu m ka m gbaba egwu Chi m nyelu mo	Allow me to dance my God-given dance
Ndi enyi m kwado m ka m gbaba egwu Chi m nyelu mo	Please support me my friends to dance my God-given dance
Di ga alu m ga afu m n'oba egwu Chi m nyelu mo	My future husband will find me in the dance arena
Nne m rapu m ka m gbaba egwu Chi m nyelu mo	My mother please allow me to do my God- given dance
Nna m rapu m ka m gbaba egwu Chi m nyelu mo, do.	My father please allow me to do my God- given dance
O bu onye na akpochigha m azu ebe m nozi n'ula	Who calls me back when I am already

egwu m, egwu alabago nuo.	concluding, my dance is ending already
Egwu ebirigo oku n'ula egwu	My dance is charged towards ending
Ayamma, ayamma o ayamma, ayamma o ayamma!	Ayamma
Nkwa!	Music!

The above piece captures the plight of a young girl who is undergoing a challenge brought about by her parents' negative attitudes towards the carrier she has chosen for herself. As a prolific dancer, she pleads with her parents to allow her develop fully the talent which God has given her. She has prepared herself fully to take up the challenges that could emanate from the field she has chosen for herself knowing that there is competition there (Ngwanu puta k'anyi nwalee! – Come out let us compete!). She has even envisaged and imagined that her future husband would probably locate her in her field of dance.

Brief Analysis of the Piece Egwu Oyoko

According to Onwuekwe (2014) on Ezegbe's philosophy on Analysis of African music composition, eight criteria were given for analysis of African vocal music composition which include: The scale mode, the tonal range, the melody, the rhythm, the texture, the frequency of tone occurrence, melodic contour typology and percentage density. However, the researcher will be doing a selective analysis using only the first five parameters mentioned above.

The Scale Mode

The scale of the piece Egwu oyoko is that of diatonic which basically consist of seven different pitches. However, the composer included a raised embellishment on the tonic and some lowered embellishment on the third and seventh notes in particular areas in the piece. There is also a presence of indefinite dominant pitch both above and below the treble stave which were used for special expressions. So below is the summation of the notes used in the piece:

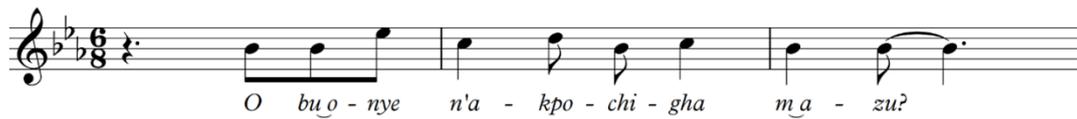


Tonal Range

The range of the piece span from indefinite B flat immediately below the middle C to an indefinite B flat pitch immediately above treble stave which is about two octaves. The key of the piece is E flat Major.

Melody

The melody has a very wide range of two octaves spanning from B flat to B flat. It made use of embellishments to express the passion of the character in the song. Also there were reoccurrences of a particular melodic idea to always keep the listener within the theme of the song textually and melodically. An extract is shown below to illustrate this:



Rhythm

The composer chose to use six quaver beats in a bar to effectively illustrate the true nature of African dance rhythm which was effectively captured in the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment embodies a fair share of harmonic and rhythmic support as a semblance of uboaka and Igba.

On a general note, a real the perceived urge, passion and dexterity of any African prolific dancer informed the creation of the solo piece; Egwu Oyoko.

Summary and Conclusion

There exist lots of creative works by the older composers that are yet to be accessed by the young. The younger composers over the time heard a lot about them yet have not seen a good number of them. It is pertinent that masterpieces created by the composers of older generation should be made available by those who may have them or reproduced accordingly by those who witnessed them if the works have seized to exist. Sometimes, knowledge is inhibited by lack of essentiality. However, and most importantly, it is also necessary that one who needs knowledge should go seeking it. Commendation goes to all who readily accept to give information and service when asked. The job of mentoring and collaboration requires the positive disposition of the two parts involved to actualize effectively.

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