

UTILIZATION OF NIGERIAN INDIGENOUS MUSIC IN CONTEMPORARY ART MUSIC COMPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous music, often referred to as folk music, is rooted in oral tradition. It is rich in cultural content of its owners: it can be purely instrumental, purely vocal or both. Indigenous music has melodic pattern, harmonic pattern and even rhythmic pattern as that of the Western World. It is possible to use the indigenous musical elements found in indigenous music in contemporary art music composition. This work, therefore, seeks to discuss the use of indigenous musical elements, the ones from Annang of Akwa Ibom State in particular, in art music composition. Some think that traditional musical elements are not potent enough for art music composition. This is a problem that this work seeks to address. The method used in this research includes interview, library review, collection of discography, recording and transcription of some Annang folk music. This research will bring to the fore the possibility of utilization of indigenous musical elements in Contemporary Art music composition. It will help academicians in the continuous use of indigenous music in the development of music composition in Nigeria and beyond.

Keywords: Composition, art music, indigenous music, utilization, musicology.

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian indigenous music is music found in Nigeria that resides in the different ethnic groups. In this context, it is traditional music and also folk music of a people. It forms an integral part of the people's way of life. Agu (1990) submits:

Traditional music is the 'indigenous music of the people which form an integral part of their way of life'. It is the folk music of a people, race, region or nation which evolves as a corporate communal experience, handed down orally from generation to generation. It includes marriage songs, initiation songs, burial music, birth songs, puberty songs, royal music, festival music, religious music,

etc. Every stage in life (especially in Africa), from cradle to the grave, has some kind of music peculiar to it (p.80).

Traditional music is rooted and perpetuated by the people. It is music passed on orally with no known composer, but it speaks the mind of the people. It finds its place in all social activities like work, games, dances and religious ceremonies. Indigenous music originates from different phases of life - work, love, patriotic songs, etc. It is ethnic oriented (Omibiyi–Obidike, 2002). As a communal and expressive art, it expresses and communicates societal norms and values and the people’s way of life. It is participatory and everybody shares in it. Let us consider the definition of folk/traditional music by various scholars. Agu (1989), in his definition of folk (traditional) music submits:

The spontaneous and traditional music of a people, race, region, or nation. It is more directly associated with traditional, religious and political systems. Since folk music is preserved by tradition, the original composer is often unknown. Since it is a spontaneous creation, folk music naturally reflects the musical idiom of its people (p. 115).

On the other hand, folk music has been defined by Nettl (1986) as:

Music of oral tradition, often in relatively simple style, primarily performed by non-professionals, used and understood by broad segments of a population and specially by the lower socioeconomic society or ethnic group and claimed by one of these as its own (p. 315).

Meki Nzewi (1980:12) describes traditional music as something that has “latent psychological, psychical and spiritualizing essence”. Speaking on traditional (African) music, Bebey (1975:vi) submits, ‘It is fundamentally a collective art. It is a communal property whose spiritual qualities are shared and experienced by all; in short it is an art form that can and must communicate with people...’

From several definitions and discussions of several scholars (Bebey, 1975; Nketia, 1992; Agu, 1989, 1990; Omibiyi–Obidike, 2002), Udoh (2006a) summarizes the inherent properties/ characteristics of indigenous music thus:

- I. It is communal and a collective art which expresses the expectations, sentiments, legend, myths, and the history of its people. It is rooted in and perpetuated by the people.
- II. It is culture-bound. It is part and parcel of the people’s way of life.
- III. It expresses the belief of the people (physically, spiritually, etc).

- IV. It is ethnic; it uses the language of the people with the correct tonal inflexion, and with its potent ingredients and traditional flavour.
- V. It is functional. It does not only find its place in all social activities, it is informative and educative and equally serves as a moral check. It provides ideas, wisdom and feelings.
- VI. It is an art form admired mostly as spontaneous and emotional creation, an uninhibited, dynamic expression of vitality.
- VII. It communicates
- VIII. It has its peculiar rhythm, mostly complex, that reflects the peoples' culture. This is why it is easy for example, to differentiate between a Yoruba folk song and Annang folk song.
- IX. It is participatory. Performances always provide occasions for communal experiences and hence, large numbers of people always participate.
- X. It unites with other aesthetic components of culture such as dance, drama, visual and literary arts. (p. 28-29).

Traditional music is potent enough for composers to tap from, and bring such potent ingredients into contemporary composition. Nigeria indigenous music has its inherent properties as music of other world cultures. It has its themes, melodic structure, tonal nature, rhythmic structure (mostly complex rhythm) and more importantly, its functional nature. Udoh (2006a) discloses that:

In the field of music, traditional music (which some regard as 'old school') and contemporary music (which some tag 'new school') have something to do with each other. One may think that traditional music is irrelevant in contemporary composition because of his shallow understanding of traditional music and its inherent properties (p. 25).

The utilization of traditional materials or the role of traditional music in contemporary composition cannot be over-emphasized. Udoh (2006a:29) discloses that "it creates identity. It is a stepping stone and also a point of departure for contemporary compositions." It is a stepping stone because inherent properties, potent ingredients, indigenous musical elements (tonal and rhythmic patterns), etc, of traditional music are employed (may not be in totality) before diversity or departure to modern trends and techniques if so desired.

Using indigenous musical elements in contemporary art music composition can be seen as part of ethnomusicology. Okafor (2005: vii) defines ethnomusicology as "the study of music in culture". If ethnomusicology is the study of music in relation to the culture that produced it, ethno-composition is, therefore, the study and composition of music in relation to a particular culture. Ethno-composition takes into account traditional musical elements present in folk songs/traditional music as a guide to an original composition.

Euba (2014) is a strong proponent of the application of musicology to composition. In fact, he (Euba) defines creative musicology as the application of musicology to composition. In creative musicology, the product is a composition, or even an entire creative idiom based on information derived from the research. The application of musicology to composition can also be referred to as 'Research Composition'.

This work, therefore, attempts to show case the possibility of using indigenous musical elements for contemporary art music composition.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this research is based on the theory of application of musicology (and/or ethnomusicology) to composition. Euba (2014), in his book, 'J. H. Kwabena Nketia. Bridging Musicology and Composition. A Study in Creative Musicology' explains the application of musicology to composition. Euba (2014) defines creative musicology as the application the application of musicology to composition. The product of research is the publication of its results in the form of speech discourse, whereas in creative musicology, the product is a composition, or even an entire creative idiom based on information derived from the research. The book further explains that creative musicology is the process of moving from analysis to synthesis. It is the transformational zone between research and composition.

This theory of creative musicology explains how musical materials gathered from folk music of all cultures are analysed and used in composition. Udoh (2012) lists such musical materials, or rather inherent properties of indigenous music to include themes, melodic structure, tonal nature, rhythmic structure (mostly complex rhythm) and more importantly, its functional nature. Motif for composition can be gotten from any of these musical materials for music creation. Truly, creative musicology provides a vital link between researching and composing in the form of composition. In creative musicology, the theory of music and the analysis of the sound of music are the main focus of attention.

Ethno-composition is another term the researcher uses to explain the application of research materials (musical elements) to composition. Ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context. The cultural materials may include the language, the melodic pattern, the scale used and even the harmonic pattern that can express the tonal inflexion of that culture in question. Such may be used in the creation of new music that may reflect the identity of that culture. As Udoh (2006a) has earlier pointed out, it creates identity and it is a stepping stone and also a point of departure for contemporary compositions. Idolor (2002) earlier said:

Structurally, the cultural elements can be identified in the tonality of the (folk) music and how the tones within the scale are manipulated. The compositional

techniques such as statement of themes and their developments with sequences, repetitions, tonal shifts, orchestration, dynamic shadings, part singing, text, texture, rhythmic and cadential formulae are all representative of culture. ...The significance and meaning of tone quality, which is produced from various musical elements, are inferred from the speech patterns of the owners who code and decode messages in and from instrumental music performances within their culture context (p.4).

Research composition is another term used to explain the use of research materials for contemporary composition. Here, the motif used in the composition is not only a product of fantasy or imagination, but that gotten from the data from the field work. Example of such works can be found in the 6 (six) compositions of Udoh (2012) in his book, 'Annang Dances: A Contemporary Compositional Approach. A Research Composition for the Piano.' Other composers have done such several works. Onyeji (2012) in his book, 'Research-Composition: An approach to the composition of African art music (with specific reference to Abigbo music)' discusses extensively on research-composition. This work is a contribution to the research-composition method aimed at deriving a continuum for African indigenous music in modern art music milieu. Therefore, indigenous music is very potent and can be used in contemporary art music composition.

CONCEPT OF COMPOSITION

The word 'composition' is not only used in music. It is also used in other disciplines, even outside the arts. Etymologically, 'to compose' simply means 'to put together'. In music, it is putting together of musical notes; it is music creation and it requires a lot of expertise. Uzoigwe (1994:157) submits, 'Composition, therefore, is an art that is highly structured, highly planned, very intellectual, mathematical, even cold blooded.' Pratt (1995:11) has his own view of composition and states, "'Composition' refers to three levels of activity: spontaneous musical creation through improvising; refining, original ideas to a finished state; altering and adapting existing music by arranging it.' Merriam (1964) adds that composition is the product of the individual or a group of individuals. In his words:

Composition seems clearly to be the product of the individual or a group of individuals and not to differ radically between literate and non literate peoples save in the question of writing. All composition is conscious in the broadest sense of the word when viewed from an analytic standpoint. Composers may be casual individuals, specialists, or group of people, and their compositions must be acceptable to society at large (p. 184).

According to Brindle (1966):

In composition, our mental activity pursues two separate but interdependent lines of thought. One is creative and receives its impulse from fantasy, imagination, and inspiration. The other is occupied with method, with the technical means which give adequate definition to what has been first conceived on the plane of fantasy (p. 1).

Imagination, fantasy and inspiration are needed in music creativity. Techniques are also needed to take one's composition to the required length.

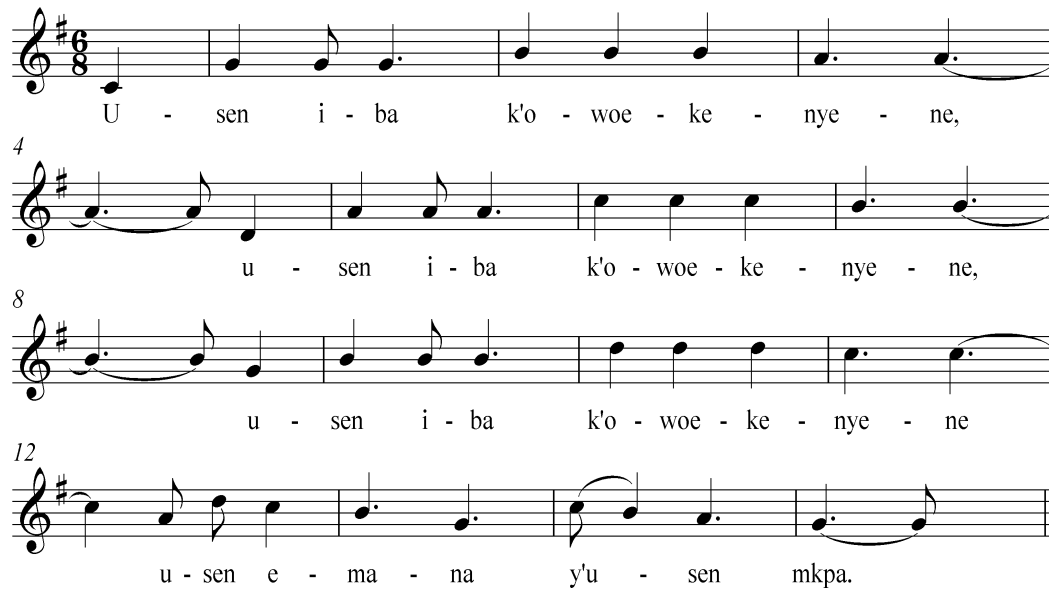
Utilization of Indigenous Musical Materials

In any musical composition, musical elements are used. Such musical elements include pitch, melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, form, dynamics and texture. Apart from Western music, these musical elements are also present in indigenous music of Nigeria in their own rights and can properly be harnessed for contemporary compositions.

Pitch: This refers to the highness or lowness of a sound. In every composition, notes of different pitches are used to create tension or release with the aid of dynamics.


Melody: Melody is a sequence of single notes, the most prominent line or voice in a piece of music. It is the line that the listener follows closely. After a thorough research, one can use the melody of an indigenous music for a new composition; it can be in the area of theme and variation. Udoh (2012:69), for example, used this indigenous melody, *Usen Iba k' owo ekenyene* from Annang land and composed new music. This is the melody (Fig. 1).

USEN IBA K'OWO EKENYENE



U - sen i - ba k'o - woe - ke - nye - ne,
4 u - sen i - ba k'o - woe - ke - nye - ne,
8 u - sen i - ba k'o - woe - ke - nye - ne
12 u - sen e - ma - na y'u - sen mkpa.

Figure 1

Udoh (2012) used this melody as a theme and got several variations from it. He also got this motif -  (from Fig. 1) and composed new music for piano and 1 (one) indigenous instrument (*ntakorok*, that is, woodblock) with the title, *Usen Iba*. See the first page of this composition below (Udoh, 2012:248).

USEN IBA

Isaac Udoh

Moderato ♩ = 100

6

12

17

Figure 2

Again (Fig. 3), Udoh (2012) uses a motif from an indigenious music from Annang land for a new composition. This time, it is not the entire melody used as theme (as the previous one in Figure 1 above), but only the motif. This is the music in Call and Response as picked from the field (Udoh, 2012: 90).


EKPE INO EBOT MI

$\text{♩} = 80$

Call
Res.

E - kpei-no e - bot mi, e - kpei-no e - bot mi m-
M-ma si-mai-ma, m-ma si-mai-ma,
3
fin ke n-dep e-bot, m - fin ke e-bot o-sop. E-
m-ma si-mai-ma m-ma si-mai-ma
5
ye- ta, e - ye- ta. E - kpei-no e - bot mi, e -
I - ta - ha, i - ta - ha. m-ma si-mai-ma,
7
kpei - no e - bot mi.
m - ma si - mai - ma.

Figure 3

This motif, , was gotten from the indigenous music above and used for a new composition for the piano as shown in Figure 4. This is an example of application of musicology to composition, that is, creative musicology. Indigenous musical elements from Annang indigenous music are used for creation of new music. This can also be done with indigenous music of other places.

INO EBOT

Isaac Udoh

Moderato ♩ = 85

5

9

12

15

Figure 4

Rhythm: This has to do with notes of different durations that are organized into patterns. A specific rhythm is a specific pattern in time. We usually hear this in relation to a steady pulse, and mentally organize this pulse or tempo into meter (sometimes called a time signature). For example, the rhythms used in the composition in Figure 4 are, to a greater extent, gotten from Figure 3. This is another example of creative musicology.

Harmony: Harmony, in the Western sense, is the succession of chords. Chords are two or more notes played together at the same time. It should be noted that the construction of chords in African music is different from that of the Western World. Westerners harmonize mostly in thirds and sixths whereas some African countries harmonize in seconds, fourths or something

different. For example, in Annang indigenous music of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, harmony is basically in fourths, probably to maintain the tonal inflexion of the people in the 2 (two) parts used. Basically, in Figure 4 above, the harmony in the composition is in 4ths (see bars 9 – 12 as example). This harmony is borrowed from the indigenous music of Annang.

Timbre: This is the quality of a sound or the ‘colour’ of a sound and often refers to different instruments. However, it also goes deeper, covering all the different sounds one instrument can create. Let us have a look at Figure 2 above. In the composition, the voices used are not less than three as against Figure 1 that has only one voice. The composition in Figure 2 has two qualities of sound: that of the piano and that of the wooden block, and can clearly be distinguished and heard at the same time.

Form: Form has to do with the blueprint or the design of music. It is the order of events in a piece of music. The term may define the number of sections, and their relationship to each other and to the whole. A form in a contemporary composition may be borrowed from Nigerian indigenous music whose basic form is Call and Response. This is discovered through research and then applied in composition of contemporary art music. The form discovered in field work may be used in a new composition.

Dynamics: Dynamics are the changes in volume – loud or soft. Changes can be immediate or gradual of time.

Texture: Texture describes the relationship of lines, known as ‘voices’ within a piece. These lines form layers of sound. Texture has categories to include monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic textures.

CONCLUSION

It is clearly seen, from the discussion and illustrations above, that indigenous music can be used in contemporary art music composition. This is possible when a serious research is conducted on indigenous music of one’s choice and the inherent musical materials discovered from such research can then be utilized. These indigenous musical materials include themes, melodic structure, tonal nature, rhythmic structure (mostly complex rhythm) and motif. From these materials, the knowledge of composition can be applied for creation of new music to suit one’s purpose.

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