

Composing Art Music Based on African Indigenous Musical Paradigms

by
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Lecture Summary

Music composition, an aspect of cultural expression, reveals deliberate efforts by composers to capture social, cultural and sometimes, abstract phenomena in sonic forms in various cultural locations. The approaches to this endeavour have followed different paths, combining different creative idioms and tools while also showcasing diverse creative limits and endowments of different composers in oral and written forms. Appearing in both vocal and instrumental forms, the question of appropriate compositional style and idiom of expression has bogged music educators and composers alike in Africa since the encounter with the West, during which written composition was formally cultivated and instituted. The search for Africa-based content and method for music composition and education has been one of the primary concerns of music educators and composers in contemporary Africa. In the bid to achieve acceptable creative pattern, different written music composers have invented creative styles or followed existing styles such as African Pianism, Research-Composition and Drummistic Piano composition. The question of deliberate development of Africa-sensitive compositional style of art music has been an issue since the later part of 20th century. Using a combination of historical, descriptive and analytical methods, I present a discourse on approaches to African art music composition based on indigenous paradigms, which aims at revealing and defining compositional attempts and styles that draw from the unique creative idioms and indigenous musical elements of Africa for the compositions. Evidences from other African scholars supporting this creative thrust are also presented. The discourse reveals the success of studying the

creative idioms and patterns of African indigenous music and using same in the composition of African art music for different media, drawing examples from existing works in Nigeria. Specifically also, the discourse outlines my contributions to the quest to explore the creative potential of African indigenous music in the composition of art music, endorsing the possibility of adopting the creative approach for music composition and creative identity for African art music.

1. Protocol

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Benjamin Ozumba
The Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic
The Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration,
All other Principal Officers present,
The Deans and Directors of Faculty and Institute,
Distinguished Past Inaugural Lecturers,
Distinguished Professors,
Heads of Academic and Administrative Departments,
My Lords Spiritual and Temporal
Distinguished lecturers
Staff of the University
My Dear wife and my good children
Lions and Lionesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen

1.1 Opening

It is my great and profound pleasure to welcome you all to this historic event of the inaugural lecture of the first living Professor of Music produced by this great University. Professor Wilberforce Chukwudinka Echezona died before his professorship was announced posthumously and so was not able to present a lecture like this. Indeed, this is a historic occasion that would remain indelible in the annals of the Department of Music and the University of Nigeria. Being the first attempt this far, it is indeed very remarkable and historic. This calls to mind Professor P. O. Esedebe's remark in the opening of his Inaugural Lecture when he said

until now no professor in our forty three-year old History Department has dared to deliver an inaugural lecture. The first ever such lecture from the sister department at Ibadan was given by Professor Tekena N. Tamuno in October 1973, that is, a quarter of a century after the establishment of the department.' For these reasons, I tremble and

suspect that I am rushing where angels fear to tread. My only excuse for this misguided boldness is simply that it takes a professor to give an inaugural lecture (2003: 13th UNN Inaugural Lecture, www.unn.edu.ng, accessed on 12th December 2014).

With the Department of Music established in 1961 as one of the founding disciplines of the University, it is a thing of great joy and deep reflection that it has become a reality for a scholar of music to mount the podium and be celebrated, like scholars in other disciplines, in the harvest of knowledge, after more than half a century since the inception of the discipline in this University.

Being the first outing of the Department, it would not be uncommon for this occasion to attract a mixed audience and listeners that fall into different categories. These are those that are here for the sheer curiosity of affirming the reality or possibility of a music lecturer becoming a professor in this university. There are those that are here for the sheer necessity of duty. There are also the knowledge collectors who would necessarily be here because of the possibility of collecting some knowledge that may be used in other contexts. There are of course those that are here because they are professional colleagues that hope to draw from the knowledge transactions that would take place here for their professional and vocational development. Indeed, there are also those that do not know why they are here. They happen to think they could be here to look around and “belong”. The mix is typical of a music performance audience. To everyone present, therefore, I say welcome. Music, being a universal art and possessing some qualities that penetrate every mind and mood, appeals to all categories of persons here present. Thus, the discourse would be of collective significance to all music practitioners, enthusiasts, lovers and admirers. Although it could be somewhat esoteric to some members of the audience, I crave your indulgence to listen attentively to the lecture.

2. Introduction/Framework

Contentions about art music composition in Africa have been quite rife and gradually escalating as studies and perspectives develop. Such contentions range from who composes African art music, what constitutes African art music, stylistic distinctions of such musical compositions, educational methods for teaching composition in Africa, to sources of creative inspiration and resource for such music. Whatever the situation might be, art music has been entrenched in Africa with its identifiable structures. Developing and sustaining identifiable and distinctive African art music remains the duty of African composers. Creative attempts of African composers have tilted to the exploration of indigenous models in their compositions since after colonial rule. This lecture encapsulates various ramifications of African art music composition, processes, structures, styles, exponents, trends and creative outcome so far, drawing from indigenous African musical material. In addition, the lecture makes a case for greater utilisation of indigenous musical material from African musical models in the composition of African art music for creative distinction and essence, if not authenticity. The lecture endorses the ethnomusicological procedure also known as research-composition (Onyeji, 2002) as the creative path to African art music. While this work projects to African art music composition, practice and concerns, the discourse takes the Nigerian standpoint into account. This is understandable, given the fact that the writer has been based in Nigeria. This is also justified by the enormous contributions to global music by Nigerian composers. Nigeria has remained an active player in the world music discourse. Issues and trends in Nigeria relate strongly to global concerns in music practice. The core material for this discourse were also drawn from Nigerian indigenous music. This presentation is in three sections thus: 1. General introductions on the main music genres and the framework of the creative process; 2. Scholarly arguments on African art music based on indigenous paradigms by African and Nigeria scholars revealing the current state of the discourse; and 3.

My creative contributions to African art music based on indigenous paradigms and my new direction in the creative process. This is followed by recommendations and conclusions or “coda”, as we would say in music.

A summary of the distinctive music arts in Africa is given below as a backdrop to the discourse that follows.

2.1 The Music Art-[Traditional-Art-Popular]

Music could be described as a creative construction in sound for social and aesthetic reasons. While many writers have presented several definitions of music, one example particularly interests me and would suffice for this purpose. Blacking (1976) defines music as “humanly organized sound”. This definition is quite penetrating and captures, in totality, the ramifications of musical application in human life as well as points to the limits of music art as human creative work. Significant in the definition also is the deliberate attempt to structure sounds as a means to an end. It reflects the thought process and deliberate action to utilize the tools of human creativity to put sound materials and patterns to artistic and aesthetic forms for human purposes. Music is thus a universal art present in all human settlements and cultural expressions. It generally cuts across cultural, social, educational and political bounds, enabling borrowing and enjoyment of music art interculturally. However, what constitutes music, its construction, how the idea is manipulated and developed, according to Herndon (1976: 222-223), depends on a particular group of people.

The music art has overtime, developed into very sophisticated written art in addition to the free expression of the art in different social and cultural locations. Music also exists for different age levels and gender groups.

The love of music has been universal, attracting both professionals and amateurs alike. Its universal appeal has endeared the art to people and has given rise to different types of the musical forms. In general, music comes in vocal, instrumental or a combination of both forms. Music is also performed as an exclusive sound art or in consonance with other arts such as dance, drama, plastic arts or

poetry. According to Okafor (2005: 2), the Greeks described music as a “Divine Discovery”, that can move people to joy or rage, stillness or motion, unity or segregation. It is sensational and can influence, intoxicate and brutalize. It can raise the soul to the planes of the Divine or sublime or stir or ignite the basest instincts of man. The day to day evidence of the power of music to influence and shape the mind of man in various human engagements draws me to accept William Shakespeare’s view that:

The man that hath not music in himself, Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sound, Is fit for treasons, stratagems, spoils; The motions of his spirit are dull as night, And his affections dark as Erebus: Let no such man be trusted (Merchant of Venice (v, I, 83) in Cohen and Cohen, 1971:339).

To my mind, there must be a musical type that interests the most hardened of all human souls and minds that the Shakespeare’s expression above is almost non-existent. However, if such a human does exist, then he/she is the most unfortunate of all humans.

Music comes in different genres to cater for different tastes and interests of people. Within any given society, one finds such genres as those that evolved or were cultivated within the society and those that were imported and fused with the local forms to arrive at new forms. For the purposes of this presentation, three genres identified in the African context would be summarised to distinguish the music art practiced.

Music in the African context is broadly distinguished into three major genres. These are the indigenous music generally called traditional music, the art music and the popular music genres. Although each could be distinctively identified in terms of its nature, form, paraphernalia for its expression or execution, following by the public and structural as well as musicological features, there is continuous overlap and interconnections in the practice and consumption of these musical genres. Thus aspects of each genre manifest and are, indeed, integrated into other genres

without any creative breach. Such overlap is even more manifest in contemporary times giving rise to a level of fluidity in the consumption by the music public. Be that as it may, the different genres are encapsulated here to distinguish them.

2.1.1 Indigenous (Traditional) Music art

Indigenous music is distinguished as one of the creative arts of indigenous African societies by which the people express themselves and their cultures through sound. Nketia's (1986) discussion of music in traditional life provides a general profile of the creative forms and practical application of indigenous music by African societies in their various social and cultural activities. African indigenous music may thus, be described as the specific musical arts creations of indigenous African societies with which they celebrate and conduct their social and cultural events and in which various aspects of their cultural lives are woven, documented and exhibited when needed. Such music utilizes the tools of oral composition (Onyeji, 2003; Herbst, Rudolph, Onyeji, 2003) for their structuring and realization. The music is also distinguished from the general music art found in the African context which covers all musical forms and types practiced in the African societies, some of which have been influenced by external-non indigenous musical idioms and styles or are completely foreign. Thus, all such other forms of music that do not emanate from the oral traditions of African societies are excluded from the musical tradition under reference. The genre under discussion in this presentation refers to the indigenous African music art that may, to a great extent, be said to be the result of genuine oral creative efforts of traditional African peoples arising from their established and accepted cultural canons. Being the creative art of folks in different cultural settings in Africa, such music is also called folk music. The International Folk Music Council defines folk music as:

The product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission.

The factors that shape the tradition are (i) continuity, which links the present with the past; (ii) variation, which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form, or forms, in which the music survives. The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular or art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community...it is the re-fashioning and re-creation of the music by the community which gives it its folk character (Karpeles, 1073:3).

Being a cultural expression, every society has inalienable right to decide for itself what constitutes music (Merriam, 1964, Blacking, 1976) and to what ends such musical constructions are put. Quite often though indigenous music is a social art integrated into the social and cultural lives of the people. That being the case, every Nigerian language (Meek, 1925 and Talbot, 1926 identified at least 250 languages though this figure has changed with more research) and cultural group boasts of a sub-genre of indigenous music practice congruent to its social and linguistic structure/preferences within the sub-cultural entity. Development, selection, application and consumption of such musical products continue to reflect and respond to the social and cultural needs that gave rise to the music in the given context.

Writers on indigenous music of Nigeria and indeed Africa have variously and in concert noted its place as a functional art –integral with life and rhythms of life (Okafor, 2004, 2005; Okafor and Emeka, 2004; Akpabot, 1986; Nzewi, 1991; Agawu, 2003a & b; Mans, 2007; James, 1999; etc.). Thus, “musical activities in African [Nigerian] societies tend to possess dynamic qualities in

that they are frequently a means to an end” (Wells, 1994: 10). According to Gunter Schuller (cited in Wells, 1994: 10), indigenous African music “originates in a total vision of life, in which music, unlike the ‘art music’ of Europe, is not a separate autonomous domain, but is rather inextricably caught up in a web of domestic, social and political activities.” As such the indigenous music of Africa, which Nigeria is a part of, reflects and reveals facets of cultural values, beliefs and modes of life of the people. “In the African culture, music is an entity rather than a mere mental creation or conception. It reflects and interprets the man in a specific environment and is often the key, which opens the gates to spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological, social and mystic realms (Okafor, 2005: 88).” As an art form, indigenous music of Nigeria reflects the culture of Nigeria as well as it is a cultural form in its own right. “It is the life of a living spirit working within those who dance and sing” (Hornbostel, 1928: 59). Africa’s indigenous music is social and primarily human-oriented in its creative and performance ramifications.

In Agawu’s (2003b: 97) view, indigenous music is text woven and produced by performer-composers who conceive them. This view draws from Mikhail Bakhtin’s unequivocal assertion that “where there is no text, there is neither object of inquiry nor thought” (quoted in Todorov, 1981: 17). Being data, basic resource and object of analysis (Agawu 2003b: 97) therefore, indigenous music qualifies as text subject to critical study, interpretation and affirmation. Inter-text of various indigenous arts with music produces complex cultural arts that define and distinguish various Africa communities which at the same time inter-nets with other existing creative genres to make a complex whole. Why and what the societies do with the creative outcomes must be significant to have consistency maintained till now.

Specific music types address different socio-cultural events such as birth rites, funeral rites, social, cultural and political mobilization, didactic and pedagogical issues, moral, values, protests and revolution, etc. Age and sex dichotomies also

determine musical constructions and group formations in certain instances. Application and dispensing of music takes into account the occasion and the required dose. Music could and are quite often catalytic to the achievement of extra-musical needs of the people. In whichever guise, indigenous music of Africa is the music of the people in different African societies cultivated by the people over several generations for the people in several generations to come.

Creative artistes and exponents of indigenous music span the entire membership of a community making ownership of music types and subgenres hard to trace to particular persons. Ownership of indigenous music is thus communal, evoking Adascalite's (1971) view on symbiotic relationship between music makers and the audience in the creative process. While the possibility of linking or associating particular music types to certain members of a society exists, it does not detract from the view of indigenous music as community property. That every member of the community is a contributing partner in the creation and structuring of indigenous music is, therefore, not in doubt. Thus, it is quite normal for children to collectively create children's music while, the youth, women and men do same to produce vibrant array of indigenous music utilized for different rites, rituals and ceremonies in the various Nigeria societies. In this way the definition of composer and performer in the traditional societies is somewhat fluid. Quite often, the composer is the performer and the performer the composer. The distinction is quite blurred, thus, bequeathing all indigenous creative outputs to unknown persons. Such creative attitude and appropriation may be contested from the perspective of contemporary demand to recognize all possible creative inputs by different individuals in a musical work, but in the traditional societies, what obtains is an organic whole in which all creative threads are inter-netted and structured as they are contributed by endowed members of the community. While special talents and gifts are recognized, appreciated and rewarded in some cases, they are not generally pulled out and isolated for individual creative

gains. In all instances, indigenous music is regarded as the cultural product of the people not an individual. I must add however, and regrettably too, that the trend is fast changing to extreme forms of commercialization of indigenous music art by the very same people that should protect it.

2.1.2 Art Music

Generally a product of Africa's contact with the West, Art music, literary music or written music could be said to be forced upon Africa from the outside without regard to the feelings of Africans themselves when one considers that Africans were not part of any negotiation to transplant art music to Africa. Although it has become a significant part of Africa's history and art, art music still remains alien to most people in Africa. In the Nigerian context, the audience for art music has been somewhat exclusive, while the music is regarded as a reserve for the elite class who align with its music for social sophistication, identity and psychedelic display of superiority. The iconoclastic and proselytizing activities of the West rooted Western art music in Africa. Quite frankly, "few scholars, writing on any subject of interest about sub-Saharan African (sic) will omit to wrestle – no matter how briefly- with colonialism, Christianity and cultural emancipation" (Flolu and Amuah, 2003: 1). Indeed, most African countries south of the Sahara share similar political history marked by Western colonization, education, religion and social influences. The West established European music education in Africa. This coerced new modes of musical expression, documentation and communication (see Herbst, Rudolph and Onyeji, 2003: 142-178; Agawu, 2003: 8-22). In the schools and churches, Africans acquired some level of musical training in piano and organ playing, classical singing and choral directing. "It was in this religious Western-oriented educative milieu that the African art composers emerged to compose sacred and secular choral works based on the Western hymn and/or madrigal. Music teaching in schools was rooted in choral singing and teacher training emphasised choral work" (Ibid: 146).

More specifically, “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. The Anglican came in 1842, the Methodist in 1845 and the Baptist in 1850.” (Adegbite 2001:78) Following on the heels of the missionaries is the British colonial government. According to Idolor (2001:136),

By 1958, Ukeje, (1979) records that the first day school established by the C.M.S. missionaries in Onitsha and post-primary schools like Baptist Teachers College, Ogbomoso, Wesley College, Ibadan and Zik Grammar School, Sapele founded in 1897, 1905 and 1943 respectively had music literally taught in their programme of studies.

“Music literacy (then) (solfa notation in particular) became expedient for the Missionary as well as the Colonial educational objectives and content. It served for producing church choirs and recreational school music (Nzewi 1999:4).”

The overriding influence and dominance of school and church choral music compositions and performances is noticeable in the history of art music development in Nigeria as in other countries in Africa.

The earliest forms of literary musical expressions in Nigeria are those choral music compositions and performances in church choirs for church services and school choral competitions and performances. Functionality or utilitarian value attached to the choral music as well as availability of performers and listeners have since then been argued as the significant reason for the proliferation of choral music in Nigeria. This scenario is replicated in many African countries where Western cultures exist. Andoh (2009/2010: 124) affirms that “the bulk of Ghanaian art compositions are choral”. According to him, “the history of the introduction of certain types of European music to Ghana, especially choral music, is closely tied with the history of the

Christian mission” (Ibid). “The churches raised choirs and singing bands out of which arose choirmasters and organists who were themselves creative composers” (Andoh, 2008: 1). “Many of the composers of the early Ghanaian era, from about 1890’s to 1950’s, began to compose in the style of the Western idioms they were familiar with, with the bulk of their output being made up of choral works” (Andoh, 2007: 163).

The platform provided by the Christian missionary and school activities in Nigeria enabled the construction of an unending bridge from the choral music “nursery” of the missionary era to the present times. The church, choir, recreational musical outlook and background of musical compositions targeted at immediate consumers during the missionary era gave a functional undertone to art music composition.

Art music is distinctly a colonizing tool that was very successfully applied to the moderation of the feelings and moods of Africans toward submission to the deception of the West. While I do not intend to pursue this in detail here, it is crucial for me to align with the perspective of Agawu (2003:8) and Akrofi (2003) who have variously described tonality and harmony of Western music as colonizing forces. Western art music is a subtle cultural force that is cultivated and entrenched wherever the West conquered as a far reaching colonial tool that attacks the subliminal consciousness of the colonized. It permeates the emotional and nervous systems of the people, particularly the elite class, making it very difficult for any organized resistance. Its effects and control have been far-reaching and, to borrow the words of Agawu (2003: 8), disastrous. Art music is distinguished into the secular and the sacred types, the vocal and instrumental forms as well as the operatic and theatrical forms. While composers of indigenous music are not recognized and do not appropriate their works, art music insists on individual ownership of composed music and proper recognition of the composers. There is also a striking distinction between the composer, the teacher, the performer, the audience, the publisher, the curator, institutions of learning, etc of art music.

Many Nigerian institutions, artistes and composers have made substantial contributions to the development of art music in Nigeria to the point that music in Nigeria cannot be complete without proper recognition and reference to art music. In the words of Agawu (2005: 18), “it is clear, however, that intellectual or artistic production by contemporary artistes and composers cannot by-pass the European legacy,... Art music is phenomenally widespread in southern Nigeria, promoted at an astonishing rate by the church and some private institutions such as the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) Centre Lagos. Many graduates of music schooled in the art and application/performance of Western art music are produced yearly who compete and jostle for positions to contribute to the entrenchment of Western art music in the Nigerian cultural and social contexts. Indeed art music has influenced and affected musical practice and discourse in Nigeria to the point that those trained in music cannot adequately discuss Nigerian indigenous music without applying the tools of Western art music. The dependence of Nigerian music educators, researchers and composers on the theories, concepts and practices of Western music is quite worrisome. Regrettably, not many Nigerian trained musicians have clear understanding of the foundations and concepts of Nigerian indigenous music while at the same time they remain ungrounded in the principles and practice of Western art music. The result is a group of people searching for identity because they are neither Western nor African in the real sense of their musical practice and engagement. Whether they would find the identity they seek is rather a mute point.

The Western art music has quite often been erroneously called “Classical” music after the music of a specific period in Western music history. According to Okafor (2004: 157), “though evolution in music is continuous, historians divide the history of music into periods with somewhat arbitrary dates. The terms are borrowed from general history and the other arts, but the dates do not always coincide”. The music periods are: Renaissance period

(1450-1600); Baroque period (1600-1750); Classical period (1750-1825); Romantic period (1825-1900); Impressionism period (1900-1918); Twentieth Century period (1918- 2000); Post modern period (2000-date). The creative styles are not water-tight but rather fluid from one period to another.

Each of the periods has its prominent composers, performers and music styles. Notation of music has also enabled the identification, study, performance and analysis of the various creative works and styles of the periods beyond cultural boundaries and historical times. Here lies the great success of art music. The possibility of the written form and dissemination beyond the locality of the composer is the strong point. Be that as it may, Western art music is, as it is, Western music in Nigeria and in other countries of Africa.

Side by side the purely Western art music in Nigeria is a genre of hybridized art music resulting from the creative efforts of Nigerian composers. These attempt a fusion of Western and African musical materials, idioms and elements in the composition of new music that seek to identify Nigeria's cultural and social distinctions. Such composers draw creative inspiration and materials from the various Nigerian sub-cultures. However, the overriding principle and practice of the creative fusion are Western primarily, as such works belong to the literary genre. Notable composers of Nigerian art music are Fela Sowande, Thomas Ekundayo Philip, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, Lazarus Ekwueme, Ikoli Harcourt Whyte, Joshua Uzoigwe, Okechukwu Ndubuisi, Dan Agu, David Okongwu, Meki Nzewi, Sam Ojukwu, Adam Feberesima, Dorothy Ipere, Bode Omojola, Christian Onyeji, etc.

2.1.3 Popular Music

Generally known as music that is popular with the people or at least attempts to evoke popular appeal among the masses, "popular music includes all music that is contemporaneous with the present time, i.e. music of the past few decades which appeals to a mass audience" (Okafor, 2004:148-9). In its best form, popular music is

more transient than other musical genres. In its bid to keep up with rapid changing tastes and times, its practitioners continuously attempt new styles, idioms of expression and satisfaction of new audiences. These drive the soul of popular music, making it quite unstable with regard to the life span of individual songs. Social, political, educational and economic conditions inspire and shape the outcome of popular music in any society. As the music is directed to issues of the moment,

it is not ceremonially or socially bound to tribal institutions. Innovations and alterations in this music are generally not prohibited by tradition. Thus, it has been changed by outside influences, individuals within the society, and integration with other societies (Smith, 1962: 11).

Popular music draws from everyday occurrences for its theme and lyrics. Quite often, it attempts to mirror society. Though there seems to be a general confusion among the populace as to the moral relevance of most popular music styles in recent times, Onyeji (2002) and Onwuegbuna (2012) identify a ray of positive relevance in the messages and musical productions of most popular music. Texts of popular music range from topical issues to soulful lyrics appealing to a cross-section of the people. Undoubtedly though, the heavy reliance on sexual issues and sexuality in contemporary popular music of the twenty first century raises strong concerns about the focus of the genre.

Relying heavily on technological infrastructure and mass media for its practice and dissemination, popular music has very strong following by the youth and the youth at heart who are responsible for the far-reaching cross-cultural consumption and commercialization of the music genre. The cultural boundaries of popular music are quite fluid and seamless as globalisation has been achieved in popular music more than in any other aspect of human life.

Popular music in Nigeria and in other parts of the world has been a product of hard work of independent professionals whose dreams

lead them to explore various creative styles to arrive at new pop styles. Sometime though, the dreams are never realised. Quite often, new pop styles are conglomerations of existing styles. A general trend is appropriation of existing musical lines and lyrics which seem to be well accepted by the pop practitioners. A hallmark of pop practice remains the high level of performance skills on various instruments calling to mind exponents like Oliver de Coque, who was an outstanding guitarist. Strong knowledge of recording studio gadgets and equipment by self-made recording “Engineers” coupled with the creative flair and pragmatic decisions of the music producers and the artistes determine the success of a pop music venture. Good singing voice is generally an asset to popular music for fine delivery of the songs.

Popular styles range from the indigenous forms developed within Nigeria such as Apala, Akuko n’egwu, Gwoge music etc, to those that combine local and Western musical cultures such as highlife, Juju, Fuji, to those imported from outside of Nigeria or developed from foreign styles such as the Raggae, Calypso, Disco, Congo music, Afro beat, Rap music, Jazz music, Rhythm and Blues, Hip Hop, etc.

3. Forms of Indigenous Music in Africa

Creative output of indigenous African societies appears in three main forms: vocal, instrumental and a combination of these. While Nketia’s (1974) study presents evidence of typologies in different African societies, very few of such musical materials have received serious creative study or application in art music composition even when they possess strong potential. While purely solo instrumental and vocal forms are found in Africa, group productions and performances dominate. This phenomenon reflects in art music composition, as would be observed in the course of the presentation. Critical to this study is the philosophy of the indigenous music practice and creativity in Africa. This significantly illuminates the ideological background from which creative resources are drawn for art music compositions. Correlating African art music compositions with the creative

ideology, idioms and resources is quite perforce to the success of the effort. Thus the philosophy of the music practice in Africa is discussed below.

3.1 Philosophy of Music Art Practice and its Uses in Africa¹

As a human-centred art, African music conforms to certain philosophies that are in agreement with the world views of the people regarding their social and cultural life. Such philosophies subsume the uses, functions, and purposes for which the music is composed. By philosophy I mean the set of beliefs, the guiding principles, values and ideas that inspire/motivate the art of music composition and performance as rationalized by the people, which are essential to the understanding and appreciation of the musical art and a society in general. According to Udabah (2004: 255), value subsumes three elements: the object itself which is a value; the object which must have the capacity to satisfy social needs; and the people who must appreciate this object for its capacity to give satisfaction. Music falls within this description of societal value. As a human art committed to human needs, it is significant to note that no music happens by chance without a rationalized creative philosophy or value attached to it within a given culture. This is particularly so in Africa. “There will always be a definitive, creative intention, creative design, and structural as well as idiomatic content to validate a music product as a veritable cultural achievement (Nzewi, 1999:3).” Be that as it may, this section of the discourse brings together the import of the various identified musical genres and acceptable types in Africa on the certainty that there is a level of convergence by all of them regarding their philosophy and use.

¹ This section of the work was developed from a paper on the same title by Onyeji, C. and Onyeji E. (2013).

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3.1.1 Music as Humanistic Commitment in Africa

Music in Africa is a human-centred art. Perhaps it is in Africa that Blacking's (1976) definition of music as "humanly organized sound" finds its most penetrating meaning. Music "is feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in human-being-ness (Nzewi, 1997: 23)." Thus, African societies do not conceive of music purely for its own sake as an expression of sheer artistic/aesthetic expertise, acumen or intellectual cum physical deftness as such but rationalize it as an integral part of human life meant to provide major and support services to human social and cultural life and events. Although music is enjoyed as a creative art in its own right, the philosophy behind its creation and practice is that it is not detached from human social life or produced exclusively for contemplation, unrelated to the social and cultural needs of the people. It is an art meant to integrate more than it disintegrates people. It is conceived as an art through which people's emotions, values, beliefs and world views are 'laced' together with its melodies and in its harmonic structures. Music in Africa is social and primarily human-oriented in its creative and performance ramifications. This philosophy informs the general and well-known notion of music in Africa as a social art well discussed by various pundits (Nketia's, 1974; Akpabot, 1986; Okafor, 2005a; Nzewi, 1991; etc). According to Nzewi (1997), "the philosophical foundations of the African musical environment and phonofacts are not always music specific." They derive from a more holistic philosophy of life and the cosmos. Being a social art therefore, "a music cannot be properly understood and appreciated without some knowledge of its social and cultural context" (Nettle 1998: 23). Music is thus a social phenomenon in African traditional societies. Music in Africa is very often celebrated as social organizer, moderator, agency, mediator, indicator, therapy as well as vehicle for social integration and cleansing. "In a very lucid study of folk music in Nigeria, Nzewi (1980) describes it as a communion of both the living and the dead. "His study points to folk music as significant element for societal cohesion as well as

social and cultural mobilization in Nigeria (Onyeji, 2006).” As a constant in Nigerian social activities, the nature and form of music have, in most cases, been determined by the social occasion which it is integrated with.

Speaking of the performance practice of traditional music in African societies, Agawu (2003) captures the degree of social correlation between performers and audience participants thus:

In a number of traditional societies, there is a widely shared belief that communal music-making presupposes being at peace with your fellow performers. You do not make music with people with whom you are feuding, or towards whom you harbor wicked intentions. If we are all together and I start making music and I see you standing there but not participating, I will immediately suspect that you hate me or that you are harboring evil thoughts toward me; perhaps, you are planning to kill me. The communalist ethos demand that we drum, sing, or dance with others (206).

The pursuit of humanizing social relations as the fundamental philosophy of music in Africa captured by Agawu above makes it critical to societal stability, social order, human commitment and participation. Thus, “the African concept of music is the sound and all actions and activities developing or deriving from it (Oehrle and Emeka. 2003: 41).”

The above views provide evidence that supports the fact that the philosophy of music in Africa, as a human-centred art, is for music to promote human cohesion and social integration more than it is celebrated as an art in its own right. It is greatly valued as an art providing needed social platform for group interaction, therapy, social healing, cultural exhibition, emotional release and musical arts creativity. To this end music is put to various social uses as found relevant in different African social and cultural contexts and

situations. The musician is also recognized as an important cultural genius who is not merely celebrated for his/her creativity but for the proficiency in applying the art in human situations and events.

3.1.2 Music as Education, Enlightenment and Moral Force in Africa

Music in Africa is rationalized as a platform for social and cultural education as well as for moral negotiation, construction and training for all members of a society. Its subtle and penetrating quality makes it well adapted to all forms of humanizing education. To the African therefore, music must provide some form of moral, social and cultural education as its essential value. Such educational values inspired very many folk songs and other ensemble works that find relevance in various events and situations. Very often, music in Africa is text-based, enabling the communication of cultural facts, values, principles and socio-moral norms acceptable to the people. It is not uncommon, therefore, for listeners and participants in a music performance context to search for the message of the music. The approval or acceptance of such music lies on the relevance of the text or message to human social or cultural values, principles and circumstances. Very recently, the role of text messages in folk music influenced modern vocal literary works that draw from traditional musical material. The primacy of song messages has thus constrained the setting of fairly long texts to music in a genre called 'native air' in Nigeria to sustain interest, appreciation and social relevance to the local community. To the African, music must be 'saying' something to the listeners, even if it is instrumental music. Drum texts respond to and fulfil this cultural norm in many ensemble music types. Thus, in the African context, music is not mere structuring of sounds without any socio-moral communication/education. This is a major distinction between music in Africa and some Western literary genres that celebrate the artistry and dexterity of musicians on musical instruments without 'communicating' anything socially or culturally.

3.1.3 Music and Social and Political Order in Africa

Music in Africa is a certified agent valued for its role in the maintenance of social and political order. It is also valued as the last resort for tackling difficult social situations in a community. Its value as a policing agent in African societies finds great usage when addressing the high and mighty in society. This is often so when the community has no other means to tackle serious cases involving the leadership group. When dialogue has failed to bring solution to a social situation, music becomes the last resort. Music is employed in such circumstances as a sacred instrument of force. This is especially so during protests and rebellion against ruling authorities. Fela Anikulapo Kuti was a well-known popular musician who employed his musical art for such a purpose in Nigeria.

In many African societies, it is believed that the musician has a level of immunity guaranteed by his musical arts. His freedom to expose erring persons including the leadership in society is well-known. Thus, music is valued as a free agent policing society. It is for everybody yet it is beyond everybody. It is a force for social and political order. To a great extent also, the musician enjoys a level of freedom that is not extended to other members of society to enable him/her to discharge his/her duty. As a free agent for social and political order, African music, believed to be part human and part spirit, is revered in African societies as no one wants to be the subject of a satiric composition or protest music. Discussing their art with respect to the social sanctions of anybody who misbehaves, Abigbo musicians of Mbaise in Igbo land say: “*Anyi tiile ya n’ Abigbo, ogawala*” (once we put it in Abigbo [the music], it spreads in the community.) This means that any information transmitted/broadcast in an Abigbo music performance is disseminated to the whole community” (Onyeji, 2002: 28-29). This constrains social conformity by the people who avoid being satirized by the musicians. By this, it is evident that Abigbo music and musicians influence the moral and ethical tone of the community of its practice.

3.1.4 Music in Human/Communal Therapy and Spirituality

Music in Africa is rationalized and valued as agency for community therapy. Its healing power has been explored and employed by various traditional and modern societies for the spiritual and physical well-being of the people. Thus, music is a source of psychical massage, emotional and mental stability, spiritual and physical healing that have transcended time and space. According to Blacking (1976), “the musical arts imbue and sustain spiritual disposition, and a state of altered consciousness.” Musical performances are rationalized to provide mental and physical well-being through the mental, emotional and physical involvements in the performance activities. Relaxation of the muscles and emotional stresses through dancing, singing and playing of instruments make music performance a source of health management and physical fitness in Africa. Music has also been effectively employed in traditional healing practices of traditional healers. The success recorded in the past has motivated the application of music in modern medical treatments. The healing power of music is noted in the efficacy of metal bell used in handling vocal problems in many societies in the past. Its employment by traditional healers and diviners is noted and quite significant. To the African therefore, the massed music making is valued as outlet for community and individual therapy through social bonding, participatory creativity, collaboration in the achievement of a social interest and creative exploration of sound structures. Music is indeed, life for Africans. It interconnects and supports all facets of African life, physically and spiritually. It is believed that a person must be very sick or have some special reason not to participate in a music activity around him/her. Even the mentally sick generally participate in a music performance uninhibited. To be judged sane in the African philosophy of life, one must get involved in a music performance happening around one. Thus, it is naturally expected of one to be moved by a music event happening around one. Even when one is sick, it is believed that participating in the musical activity relieves the sickness.

Because of its spiritual nature, it is understandable that music in Africa reflects the philosophy of spirituality of the people. Belief in the synergy of physical and spiritual forces is quite rife in Africa. Almost every aspect of the life of the people has its social and spiritual meaning. Spiritual interpretation and essence of figures, such as four and seven (Onyeji, 2009) for instance, find relevance and social meaning in many African societies. Thus, African music is spiritualizing, ennobling and healing to both the musicians and the people and is as well, the soul of African life. It is always a process of harmonization of the physical and the spiritual, a fundamental philosophy of life activities in Africa. Spirituality and therapy give value to music in Africa.

Recent research findings in other climes support the increasing value of music for health and life sustenance. The discovery arising from recent scientific experiments employing music reveals that life could be prolonged and humans could achieve healthy living by participating in creative musical activities regularly. This crucial finding at once brings to the fore the primacy of music in human life beyond its current relegation as mere tool for entertainment or element for the celebration of other achievements. It constrains concerted rethinking on the hitherto general 'abuse' of the art by the very same people that should give congruent attention to it, owing to its potency and efficacy.

Similarly, music has been implicated in the brain development and balance of young children. Its contributions to mental (cognitive) emotional (Affective) and physical (Psycho-motive) developments of children are well-known, giving rise to its use in pre-school activities as well as in pre-primary schools. Constant involvement of children in musical/creative activities has been found to provide a great boost to their mental alertness and has been recommended by experts as a critical means to achieving academic results and solutions to autism, speech impairments, alzheimer and other neuro-related disorders. Such uses necessitated the teaching and learning of music as a compulsory school subject in developed countries.

Contemporary health and social challenges have prompted the search for cost effective and less toxic solutions. Music has been indicated in some of such treatments. For instance, Davidson and Lutz (2007) are of the view that due to the ability of the human brain to change its structure and functioning, known as “neural plasticity,” researchers believe that happiness may be more of an acquired skill than a natural state of being. Music-related findings support and transform the bodies and mental states of musicians plagued by anxiety, depression, and excessive mental chatter” (Berenson, 2002; Bruser, 1997; Chang, Midlarsky & Lin, 2003). Schauer and Mauritz (2003) are of the view that “musical motor feedback improves a stroke patient’s ability to walk to a greater extent than conventional gait therapy” (230). Stanley & Ramsey (2000) acknowledge music as a motivating factor for patients with brain injuries such as stroke and neurological diseases, to participate in exercises and activities. “It has also been used in the non-pharmacological treatment for behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia” (Pettersson and Nystrom, 2011: 230). Svastdottir (2006) notes the effective application of music therapy groups in the reduction of activity disturbances, aggressiveness and anxiety in patients with Alzheimer disease. Magee & Davidsson (2002) believe that interactive music can have immediate and positive effects on the engagement of dementia subjects with apathy. Further studies have shown the psychological and physiological stress-reducing effects of creative activity, particularly the marked effects of music performance (piano playing),... artistic creative activities, especially music (performance and listening), may play critical role in sustaining human life. We consider this an important factor when considering the value of music education. Until now, the purpose of music education has been said to be the transmission of cultural heritage or to help students to achieve their potentials (Toyoshima, 2011: 260).

Toyoshima (2011) reveals the valuing of music beyond their philosophical and aesthetic meanings, reaching out to evidences of

psychological and behavioural endocrinological meaning to playing of music. The study highlights the biological import of music. According to Toyoshima, “with all the stresses of modern society, music education in schools has a new purpose: the improvement of mental health” (261). Also Verghese, Lipton, Katz, et al., (2003), note the value of artistic activities in reducing the risk of dementia onset. Music facilitates expression, communication and relationships in non-verbal contexts. Toyoshima (2003) notes the possibility of music to innovative low-cost option for use in preventive medicine. Toyoshima’s (2003) research results “demonstrate the possibility of musical training as part of school and social education for stress management and dementia prevention” (261).

These critical findings underscore the value placed by world cultures on music and other creative arts up to the present generation, particularly Africa. Treatment of ailments with music has been practiced in Africa for many centuries before the recent findings. Collaborative research between medical sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences and engineering with music experts awaits serious attention from stakeholders to discover the application of Africa’s indigenous music in the solution of human problems.

3.1.5 Music in Africa as Entertainment

Although a significant aspect of music practice in Africa, entertainment seems to be ranked the lowest in the hierarchy of value. This is because while all African music types implicate some form of entertainment, they address other issues more than they dwell on mere entertainment. Quite often, music is concerned with social-spiritual issues while employing entertainment as a vehicle for the delivery of its specific concern. Entertainment is often taken for granted and constitutes the background on which other aspects of the music are constructed. This does not mean that there are no music types that are performed for sheer entertainment. There are music types that exhibit the creative and

performance skills of musicians for sheer artistic and aesthetic purposes. This is however, quite rare in African conception and practice. Music types that address human social concerns while employing the entertainment aspect of the music as a means are commonly found. The question, however, is whether it is possible to find an African music type that has no social or spiritual concern beyond entertainment. Even when the music is for children, entertainment seems to be secondary and a subtle facet of music that assists in the delivery of its social essence. At least, the textual content would address issues that could be the essence of the music beyond entertainment.

It is critical however to emphasize that every music presentation must explore the element of entertainment in its delivery for it to be of social and cultural significance. This conforms to Africa's social belief and approach to life that reaches out to the most human and relaxed way of executing things. Music, to the African, presents a most human means of social entertainment while conducting other social businesses. African music is therefore rationalized to be entertaining in order to motivate general participation and creativity by all. The entertainment value of music has made it one of the most acclaimed creative arts in Africa. Thus, music must retain its entertainment value to be of social and cultural significance.

4. Framing the African Composers and Musical Composition

The creative persons actively engaged with and responsible for the composition, production, documentation/preservation and dissemination of indigenous music are the indigenous musicians. These men, women, youths and children have been responsible for creating and presenting various forms of music that have impacted the lives of Africans in various ways through the generations (Onyeji, 2013:49). Similarly, the composers that have duly processed sounds in written or literary forms following the tools of Western art music are known as the African art music composers. Although the definition is quite broad and elastic in scope, further

delineations could be made based on the level of contributions made or perspectives developed in art music composition. The general understanding is that any meaningful contribution in this regard counts. Composition is the structuring, re-structuring and unearthing of finished music or part thereof. On a broader perspective, composition “means textural construction/re-construction/re-formulation/refinement, improvisation or extemporization of music, text or dance.” (Onyeji 2002:31).

Composition occupies a focal position in music education. The argument is hinged on its place as the “substance” of music. It is also the practical means of creating, assessing/evaluating, appreciating, approving or otherwise of music.

The all-embracing term composition, which applies to all other creative arts disciplines such as drama, poetry and plastic arts, is used in the discourse that follows to represent the process and product of music creativity. This presentation is thus concerned with the need to present a paradigmatic approach to composition in Africa from the Research-composition perspective.

If the argument that composition (process and product) occupies a strategic position in music education, being the focus of research, performance and to a great extent, music education, it would then be necessary to constantly assess the state of music education in Africa, with respect to composition, in order to respond to changing times and tastes.

Composition, as a field of creative endeavour in music, permits and accommodates the creative efforts and contributions of people at different levels of proficiency. As such, many works have been composed by both the highly skilled and amateurs that have been appreciated by music lovers. In its professional sense, the word composition embraces the works and contributions of the highly skilled and proficient people in the field. There is also a possible argument as to the place of the creative efforts of the not-so-highly skilled, not-well-known and the non-cosmopolitan composers in the general understanding of the word. Considered differently, it may well be that there is room for all the practitioners to submit

their works for the general enrichment of musical genres. Whatever the case, while the masters of music composition are recognized as leading contributors, the efforts of the not-so-skilled are recognized also. While the distinction may be considered unnecessary by some, it is relevant in this work to have a reference point. This text, therefore, points to the efforts of the well-known and true-to-business contributors known and referred to as the composers or the Masters.

Mensah identified three groups of African composers:

those who work strictly according to Western rules of composition. Those who seek to blend Western and African musical elements in original compositions for enjoyment as authentic African contributions.... The third group also may consciously or unconsciously, use Western structural models; but they apply to their compositions heavier doses of African musical elements from African music. These composers include Serukenya, Kyagambiddwa, Riverson at times, and Euba during his second period (1998:222).

In my view, the list should be enlarged to include Joshua Uzoigwe, Meki Nzewi and Christian Onyeji in the third group. In the first category, we have some Nigerian composers like T.K.E Phillips, Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole and Dayo Dedeke. The second category includes some composers as Okechukwu Ndubisi, Sam Ojukwu, Dan Agu, David Okongwu, Adams Feberesima, Felix Nwuba and Bode Omojola.

5. Creative Outputs of Composers

The introduction of music as a formal course of study in Africa necessitated the study of notation for the purposes of writing music on paper. The two main forms of notation (staff and tonic solfa) were introduced for the purposes of teaching, learning, writing and

composition of art music. These have been used in Africa as a whole for documenting art music, African or Western, until recently when some African music scholars rationalized different forms of notation for documenting African music.

Creative outputs from African art music composers are in the form of anthems, solos for different instruments and voices, operas, music dramas, instrumental works of various combinations, intercultural works featuring Western and African instruments, accompanied and unaccompanied choral works, music dramas, avant garde compositions featuring modern works, keyboard works, etc.

Most African composers of written music are choral composers. Fewer composers of written music for instruments are found in Africa when compared to the number that composes vocal music majorly. These include Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, Lazarus Ekwueme, Joshua Uzoigwe, Meki Nzewi, Yemi Olaniyan, Bode Omojola, Michael Blake, Halim El-Dabh, Kwabena Nketia, Ed Bland, Justinian Tamusuza, Christian Onyeji, etc.

Composers that have contributed immensely to the development of written music in Nigeria include the following:

Rev. T. K. E. Phillips (church anthems); Fela Sowande (symphonic works, organ works and jazz arrangements); Akin Euba (piano pieces which he calls “African Pianism”, operatic work, intercultural works for ensembles, solo songs for voice and piano); Ayo Bankole (organ works, vocal pieces for voice and piano, secular choral pieces); Wilberforce Echezona (secular choral works, church anthems); Samuel Akpabot (orchestral pieces, choral works, an operatic work); Lazarus Ekwueme (secular/sacred choral pieces, church anthems, an opera, solo songs); Adam Fiberesima (Operatic works, secular choral pieces); Dayo Dedeke (Yoruba hymn book) and Okechukwu Ndubuisi (piano pieces, secular and sacred choral works, solo songs for voice and piano). Others are Felix Nwuba (secular and sacred choral works and anthems); David Okongwu (sacred choral works and church anthems); Samuel Ojukwu (secular and sacred choral

works); Dan Agu (Secular and sacred choral works and anthems); Ikoli Harcourt White (sacred choral works and hymns); Meki Nzewi (musical theatre works including music-drama, musicals, operas, danced drama, television drama, secular choral pieces, church anthems, works for intercultural ensembles, pieces for voice and drum and drum solos), Joshua Uzoigwe (drummistic piano music, secular solo songs for voice and piano, intercultural works for voice and piano and symphonic works); Christian Onyeji (solo songs for voice and piano, drummistic piano works, secular and sacred choral works, a symphony, quartet, intercultural ensemble works); Bode Omojola (secular choral pieces, operas, solo song for voice and piano); Yemi Olaniyan (secular choral pieces, experimental compositions for Nigerian instruments, works for solo Nigerian instruments).

6. Art Music Composition Based on Indigenous Models in Different African Geographical Locations

The ephemeral nature of musical styles and tastes necessitated the continuous search for diverse ways of arriving at the “definitions” of music. This led some composers to explore potent elements in folk music to create new forms of music. In the West, Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly are notable European composers who used elements from folk music to compose new music. Composers in different African countries, including Nigeria, have also pursued this creative vision with varying degrees of successes. It would be safe to say that drawing creative inspiration from folk sources as well as utilizing such material in assembling art music is not new to many African composers and arrangers. However, the degree of sophistication in the manipulation of folk materials differs. The general motivation for this new development is the need to root the creative outputs to the indigenous cultural norms and foundation of Africa as well as the quest for identity in the global competing music space. Exploration of indigenous music of Africa became perforce.

The abundance of different types of indigenous music in Africa makes it imperative for art music composers to draw relevant material from such music types, if they intend to give their works cultural identity. The study of Africa's musical heritage that offers deeper analytical/theoretical insight into the musical and sociological interests of the various musical traditions is imperative to the African art music composer that does not aspire to merely copy the Western approach to composition. The need to document as well as explore the unique features of Nigeria's musical heritage is critical and has been emphasized by many Nigerian writers.

Proper understanding of structural and formal theoretical merits of indigenous African music, vocal or instrumental, is considered a key to composing original music, which will be African in general content and specific to the creative tradition. The need to establish a creative paradigm that is authentically African, deriving from Research-composition is considered urgent in the face of the Euro-American classical hegemony. This lecture aims to support and motivate re-orientation, re-direction and a departure for the younger generation of African composers in particular.

At the wake of the second half of twentieth century, there was noticeable creative shift in the concept and process of African art music composition to those assimilating and exhibiting greater influences from creative idioms and elements of African traditional music primarily. This could be called a kind of musical nationalism comparable to that in the West at the beginning of twentieth century by the "Russian Big Five". This creative shift/interest has manifested in both vocal and instrumental music. The issue of relevance, creative essence, identity, if not authenticity, have been the major concern in the attempt to root the compositions to indigenous models as already noted. While some writers have attacked the basis of the authenticity of such works as African (Emaeyak. 2013) or do not see the Africanness of such hybrid compositions, the major credit to such works lies at the

level of prominence given to indigenous musical models as well as the attempt to operate from within the African cultural context and material. Some such manifestations have been discussed and the creative concepts defined. In Nigeria, for instance, there are “African Pianism” (Akin Euba 1993: 8); “Research-Composition” (Onyeji: 2002; 2005), Drummistic Piano composition (Onyeji 2008), African vocalism (Onyeji, 2015).

6.1 African Art Music and the Indigenous Paradigm

Attempting to key into the new creative development, many African composers have grappled with the need to give their works African cultural identity. Although many have found ways of distilling and synthesizing African musical idioms in their art music, many are still making serious attempts. In the works of the following are manifested various African traditional musical elements/idioms implicating African cultural identity at various levels: Ephraim Amu, Kwabena Nketia, Robert Kwame, Akin Euba, Joshua Uzoigwe, Meki Nzewi, Samuel Akpabot, Bode Omojola, Okechukwu Ndubuisi, Jean Zaidel Rudolph, Dan Agu, Christian Onyeji, Stefans Grove, Isak Roux, Alexander Johnson, etc.

Motivated by the new wave of art music composition, many African art music composers have attempted the integration of indigenous music materials in their work in order to ensure Africa’s indigenous music continuum in modern global music scene. Despite their creative efforts, it is still critical to ensure that there is a measurable framework on which African art music could be rooted to the idioms of indigenous music. This has become extremely necessary given the wanton claims and appropriations by composers to the Africanness of their creative outputs. It is not just enough to lay claim to the Africanness of a music composition. There is need for clear evidence to authenticate the creative process and its cultural identity as emanating from the idioms and elements of African music.

Most African composers that have attempted fusion of African and European musical idioms did not present literary discourses of their works as well as their methods to guide further research or study of their works. However, available evidence and literatures relating to this lecture are presented here to illuminate some perspectives on art music compositions in Africa based on indigenous models.

Discussing the use of indigenous music materials by Western-trained musical creators, Klatzow cited in Roosenschoon (1999) argues thus:

should those composers who wish to absorb African elements then become ethnomusicologists, making field trips or diligently studying tape recordings? But in what ways does one study such material- in terms of its anthropological background and the function of the music in the societal structures from which it emanates, or through the analysis of elements that indicate inter-traditional congruity, leading to comparison of one system with another and extrapolation of parallels with, or difference from, the more familiar Western musical matrix (267).

In a presentation elsewhere, I had challenged this argument and justified such engagement thus:

an African composer of modern music that intends to create from the African stock necessarily needs to understand the musical environment and creative forms that he intends to utilize in his new music composition. He must grasp and keep abreast with the creative theories, principles and practice of the music tradition he intends to explore. This would in nearly all the cases involve clearly structured field and analytical studies of the music. This entails

ethnographic and musicological studies in order to understand the stylistic distinctions of the music as well as the creative environment that inspires, stimulates and structures the music type. Klatzow's argument is weak when it is presented vis-a-viz modern European composers. A European composer necessarily needs to study history of music, form and analysis of music, theory and counterpoint, harmony etc. in order to appreciate the creative influences on past composers as well as grasp relevant theories, principles and practice for the composition of European music. If these are appropriate for the European composer, why then would it be superfluous for a composer that wishes to absorb African musical elements to make field trips or diligently study tape recordings of African music? (Onyeji 2005).

Klatzow further posits thus:

personally, I have always maintained that there are three choices open to the composer in Africa. First, one may wish to remain faithful to one's European heritage and distil one's inspiration from contemporary Western trends...Secondly, one may decide on a purist approach to one's African roots, and go with ethnomusicology. Thirdly, there is the option of cross-culturalism, to a greater or lesser degree, though whether one can ultimately do equal justice to both worlds remains, aesthetically and musically, a rather moot point (Ibid:267-8).

While the choices presented are acceptable, they do not detract from the nationalistic trends that necessitate the application to a greater degree of African musical elements and idioms in modern art music composition.

Highlighting the efforts of some pioneers, strong note is taken of the contribution by Agawu (1984), in his discussion of Ephraim Amu's compositional style. Agawu's position is that:

the first and most important task is the collection of traditional music...It is not only to collect this music, whose chances of survival are lessened daily by the strong forces of acculturation, but to study its structures thoroughly. Bela Bartok is, of course, our model here and the parallels between his development as a scholar-composer and Amu's are suggestive. Both composers collected traditional music (Bartok more than Amu); they both consciously cultivated a compositional style from this music; both were educated in the Western European musical tradition and sought to create a synthesis between this "foreign" tradition and their native traditions. (70).

Agawu's leaning on drawing from the totality of indigenous music for art music composition is evidenced by the above position. It is his position that there is gain in conducting research on traditional music of Africa through field recordings, discussions/interviews, transcriptions and analysis of traditional music for their application in a new art music. This creative direction has parallel in the efforts and contributions of some Western composers. By implication therefore, Bartok had earlier taken the lead in a compositional method similar to research-composition. His expeditions to the remote parts of Hungary, assisted by Zoltan Kodaly, resulted in the recording, on wax cylinders, of thousands of peasant tunes. Bartok, having discovered the existence of a deep layer of native ore beneath the pyrites of Gypsy ornamentation, he set out in 1905 to mine it, an undertaking which led him eventually to investigate and classify scientifically the peasant music of Romania and Slovaks, Walachians, Turks, even the Arabs of

North Africa; moreover to reconsider his aesthetics, to found a style upon the assimilated essence of peasant music, and to determine the direction of the art music of Hungary for years to come. (Stevens 1953:23).

Bartok, in addition to his recordings of peasant music, placed great emphasis on the transcription and analysis of the music before incorporating elements from the peasant music into his original work. His method involved a “detailed examination of the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the peasant tunes, and by the derivation of harmonies from them, the discovery of the intrinsic nature of Magyar peasant music, and finally its amalgamation with the techniques of art music.” (Ibid: 24).

Bartok’s contributions marked a turning point in the history of European art music compositions. His works draw attention to the inherent creative potential of the indigenous music of the people of Hungary. His method provides a global platform for connecting the African efforts, its approach and creative outcome.

These two positions evidence the main thrust of this lecture as a global musical interest.

In another contribution, Agawu observes that:

most African composers often adopt individual solutions to the problems of reconciling various, sometimes conflicting, formative influences. For some it is not a question of conflict; different orientations simply enrich the resources available to them. Any model that seems suitable for a specific composition purpose is adopted irrespective of origin. (1984:53).

Agawu’s observations present the underlying truth about Nigerian and many African art music composers. Many African composers still grapple with conflicting influences. Two main formative influences are identified in the African contexts. Western classical music training through Western music education and traditional music education acquired hereditarily or through conscious

exposure to traditional musical practices. A greater part of the traditional music influence is lost during the Western music training due to over emphasis on Western classical music education. As such, the creative output of most African composers draw more from the Western classical idiom than from the traditional musical idioms. In their works therefore, foreign models are frequently adopted in place of indigenous ones. The few attempts to give these compositions an African flavour are done from the outside in a somewhat “neoclassical” fashion rather than within the African tradition itself. In certain cases, the composers are simply unaware of the creative potentials of the traditional music. (Ibid: 53).

This influence is evident in Uzoigwe’s earlier works such as “Egwu Amala”, “Lustra Variations”, “Atilogwu” and “Olurombi”. The works of Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba (earlier works), Fela Sowande, Adams Feberesima (particularly, Opu Jaja) also show such influences. Some younger generation of Nigerian composers are also caught up in the dilemma. Very many of them do not have clear grasp of the creative potential of traditional music. Some avoid composing in the traditional music idiom while others merely abstract melodic or rhythmic passages for a tokenistic contemporary composition. Omojola argued against that by saying that “mere use of a national melody is not enough to give a work a national identity” (2000: 211). Nzewi describes such as a “token African gesture in essentially Western Classical music composition” (1997: 72). He argues that:

the role of literary modern composer or performer is to ensure that his or her creations are a logical continuum, not a continuation or bastardisation of tradition...a contemporary development deriving from the traditional creative philosophy and principles with respect to texture, form, harmony and thematic development (Ibid:71).

Slawson identifies some problems that non-Western musical cultures may place on indigenous composers. He says “the first kind of constraint is said to arise from a felt need to reach both an audience “at home” and one that is international in scope” (1989:317). He goes on to argue that Westerners, at least Americans, are free from the constraints implied by composing for one’s neighbours and one’s national and international colleagues at the same time. But non-Western composers have the difficulty of audiences that are conditioned by traditional or popular genres in which innovation is not greatly valued. Though Slawson’s argument about audiences in non-Western cultures is correct in a way, his conclusion that innovation is not greatly valued in the music of non-Western cultures is a bit exaggerated. While there is pronounced following for traditional and popular music in African societies that tend to submerge the art music audience, I am aware that there is still cognitive audiences for composed art music of different styles in Nigeria, at least even within the followership of non-art music. These identify with art music and appreciate it for what it is and greatly value innovations in the art. In Nigeria, for instance, there is a modern art music center in Lagos- Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) Center, where international composers and performers of art music of different styles and nationalities perform regularly. In fact, traditional music, to the best of my knowledge, has not been performed in the center. The audience for this is still an extraction from the global music audience in Nigeria. It may therefore be misleading to imply that all non-Western audiences are not able to transcend their traditional music backgrounds to appreciate innovations in art music compositions. While the level of appreciation, in some cases, is not comparable to the Western audiences, we have fanatical cases and strong following that is recognizable. It is also unfounded to conclude that non-Western music, traditional or popular, audiences do not greatly value innovation. All forms of arts are dynamic. They assimilate changes according to time, taste or environment. There is little need to belabour the fact that

traditional music has always absorbed changes and innovations from generation to generation. These are evident in costumery, harmonic structures, stylistic designs and general musical content. The observation regarding home and international audiences is not a major constraint. The universal and communicating power of music as “language” overcomes such constraints. The background of audiences is not a perceived constraint to the application of African traditional musical idioms and principles in modern art music compositions. Dramatisation of this constrain is not as important as motivating composers for enduring creative efforts that draw from perceived area of interest of the consumers of such works. It may well be that home and abroad audiences are in need of new approach to composition.

Njoku observes that:

an encouraging development in Nigeria’s musical tradition, and one that has importance for the history of composition in Nigeria is the transformation of folk songs into art songs and other genres. Ikoli Harcourt-White’s choral compositions, Bankole’s art songs for voice and piano, Felix Nwuba’s “O Nwa Mmuo Ka Mkara Gi”, Ndubisi’s “Sese Isantim”, and Ekwueme’s “Nwa Neku Nwa” drew textual and melodic materials from Nigeria. (1998:237).

This is a legitimate observation. But it is pertinent to note that within the prevailing music scene in Nigeria, there is undue dominance of choral music. There is a dearth of instrumental music of symphonic scope. Original solo song compositions arising from understanding and application of creative distinctions and norms of African music is almost non-existent. Proliferation of solo song arrangements has been noted. This has some constraints. This position is corroborated by Lobamijoko when she said “most solo songs by Nigerian composers...have always presented limitations for singers because the writers themselves are still quite

limited in their expressive techniques for solo voice having written always for choruses” (Nwosu-Lobamijoko2001:71). Ekwueme also observed that “contemporary musical practice in Africa, in spite of acculturation and incorporation of features resulting from various forces of external influence, has tended to maintain the same predominance of group and vocal activity” (2001: 16). The dominance of group music making over solo songs is traceable to church/choral history of art music in Nigeria. As such, the dominance of choral music till today, has constrained most Nigerian composers to pay less attention to the composition and development of solo songs. This has constrained a dearth of modern Nigerian solo songs when compared to choral music in Nigeria.

The art music scene in Nigeria does not give a balanced impression of the creative potential of the composers. It does appear that most of the composers are leaning more on choral compositions or that they are incapable of composing instrumental works. The latter is not the case, I believe. The reason could be that appropriate motivation is not yet given. The creative tools are available for exploration and experimentation. It only calls for the determination of the composers to search for ways to diversify their creative endeavours. Most of the composers seem to be satisfied with arranging folk songs for voice and piano or for mixed voices (S.A.T.B.). Many have not also shown their ability to compose original works other than folk song arrangements. On the other hand, few Nigerians that have composed symphonic works face the problem of unavailability of trained performers and symphony orchestra in Nigeria. An attempt at setting up a national orchestra in 2001 was frustrated by underlying religious issues, political misplacement of priorities by the very same people that should fight for its existence-the art musicians that were responsible for its existence as Directors and Planners. While we mourn the failure of this project, it is the hope of every serious minded Nigerian art music practitioner or lover that this project

would be revived for the sake of its significance and relevance in the country.

Nzewi (1997:72) argues that:

a composer of African modern music should enable a listener to appreciate the quintessential African harmonic, developmental and textural-structural idioms. Otherwise the composition is of no consequence to a continuum of African creative integrity. It will be a disservice, in fact an insult, to Africa to categorize it as African modern music. It could be a modern African's music.

This position supports the perspective of this work. In order to capture the compositional idioms and evoke the essence of a given traditional music in a composition, a detailed study of the traditional music is essential. Research-composition therefore, seems a necessary approach for modern African art music compositions.

6.1.1 In the Nigerian Context

Many leading composers in Nigeria have called attention to the need for modern literary music composers who are not entirely Western in their orientation to aspire towards creative continuum of Nigerian music, by drawing compositional materials from the authentic indigenous music of the Nigerian cultures. Some postulate that competent knowledge of the creative principles and procedures of the music traditions of Africa is a prerequisite for a creative process that will capture the essence of African music, and give unique theoretical frame to the new music. Nzewi advocates that it is the duty of modern literary musicians to draw from the abundant music types in Africa to develop modern music that will be a creative continuum and not a continuation of African music heritage. He proposed modern literary music that will evolve from its traditional counterpart.

He argues that:

the role of modern musicians who are catering for a New World audience as well as new trends in music appreciation will not be to repeat tradition... The role of the literary, modern composer or performer is to ensure that his or her creations are a logical continuum, not a continuation or bastardisation of tradition. By a continuum, we imply the fish bone theory-a contemporary development deriving from the traditional creative philosophy and principles with respect to texture, form, harmony and thematic development.

A continuum implies the non-contextual rationalised representation of the musical essence of traditional event-music. Bastardisation on the other hand implies abstracting an essentially African melody or rhythmic pattern and inserting same as a token African gesture in an essentially Western classical music composition, which is, therefore, treacherously and insincerely dubbed modern African composition (Nzewi 1997:71-72).

Euba also argues that:

Some of us are so preoccupied with producing symphonies, faithful to the European classical styles, that we are oblivious of the “symphonic” potentialities of African traditional ensemble music. Others are intoxicated with the pop music culture of America and remain ignorant of African rhythms, whose danceability will outsell the most commercial disco from America (1987:32).

Discussing the creative activities of some modern literary composers, Uzoigwe points out that “many countries in the world

have produced composers at one time or the other, who have in various ways sought inspiration from the traditional music of their country for the creation of a written art music that would represent its local sources and as well be international in its communication” (Uzoigwe 1992: 9). He gave some examples as Ralph Vaughan-Williams, Benjamin Britten, Zoltan Kodaly, and Bela Bartok etc. He went on to say that “most of them made both conscious and unconscious efforts to draw on the folk songs of their people” (ibid).

He further wrote that:

many of the Nigerian composers are not only accomplished musicians in the European tradition, but are scholars in ethnomusicology and therefore, among the leading spokesmen and women on the traditional music of their peoples. However, Nationalism in the music of these composers is of a different kind.

They have been born into cultures, in which music making forms an intricate pattern that conveys the people’s ideations and material constructs of their existence. As such, their main aim is to explore the creative potentials, which are inherent in their musical traditions, and to recombine the various elements in a new order, that would not be a departure from, but an enhancement of the evolutionary process and continuity of their musical cultural heritage... The composers seek to extract the new art music from the event performance situation of traditional music and confine it to the concert platform... In spite of all this, there is a desire to maintain a bond between the old traditional art, and the new art and this means that the composers have to exploit in their works, those musical elements that can serve as common bond between the two. Hence, one observes in their works the invocation of African characteristics such as the speech mode, dance mode, polyrhythmic and various types of tonal organizations (ibid: 10).

Though the experiment of fusing African and European elements in new music creations by modern literary composers who have acquired European music education has been on for a generation or two, Uzoigwe observes disparity in the successes recorded by different composers in the synthesis.

In a similar view, Akin Euba argues that “an intimate knowledge of the theory and practice of traditional music is a key to the discovery of new creative and performance techniques based on African models” (Euba 1987: 32). He also believes that “African musicians cannot command worldwide attention, unless their modern idioms (like traditional music) project a strong African perspective, irrespective of whatever foreign elements go into the making of these idioms” (ibid). He goes on to recommend that the basic creative elements for a neo-African musical language must be drawn from the totality of the African traditional idioms. In view of this, he rejects the assumption that certain works by African composers in which folk tunes serve no other purpose but to give an African flavor, should be considered as representing a truly Neo-African Idiom.

These arguments buttress the position that for any meaningful creative continuum of African/Nigerian indigenous music in art form, art music composers aspiring to contribute to the creative vision should first carry out cognitive study of the indigenous music types. The compositional approach that backgrounds an in-depth ethnomusicological research of indigenous music is termed “Research-Composition”.

6.2 Trends in Musical Composition in Africa after Colonial Period

That African Art music composers have made attempts to draw from African traditional music is not in doubt. What seems to have remained in doubt is unanimous agreement on what is to be drawn from African traditional music to make an African art music representative of the culture and social context it is taken from. There seems to be a high level of individualism in the practice at the moment, each composer taking off from his or her chosen creative direction. This may have been validated or promoted by the sheer idea that creativity and its manifestations are, to a great extent, based on individual endowments, capturing the creative and theoretical limits of a given composer brought to bear on a given work. While this is legitimate, to some extent, there is still considerable need for empirical and methodical approach to a creative work to justify its aesthetic and creative merits, at least, at the literary level of creative endeavours, drawing from indigenous models.

While not dwelling on the above argument, it seems there is conflict as to whether taking a melodic line from an African traditional work and inserting same in an art music composition is representative enough for it to be accepted as an authentic African art music. There is strong conflict as to whether inserting a known rhythmic line from a traditional music in an African art music composition makes the work distinctively African. No agreement has also been reached on whether the “magic wand” lies in the use of vernacular text or mere coating of a known African song with essentially European harmonic material in a musical arrangement. In this wise, neither an accepted definition of what constitutes the nature of African art music composition nor a rigorously tested and accepted compositional procedure/process exists. The result is proliferation of individually-applied methods, processes and procedures such as those initiated by Akin Euba (African Pianism 1993: 8), Onyeji (Research-Composition 2002, 2005, Drummistic Piano Composition 2004, African Vocalism 2015, Nsukka Choral

School, 2015), as well as those that have not been given theoretical definitions. In all these, however, the essence is to directly give an art music composition authentic African root/base/branding. Omojola already highlighted this about Nigerian composers thus:

The need to make their works [vocal and instrumental] culturally relevant has been a major pre-occupation of modern Nigerian composers (2000: 218-219).

If this singular need is crucial, composers must then draw from the totality of what makes African indigenous music for their works. They would, ab initio, attempt to distillate and synthesize palpable essence and idioms of the traditional African music on which their works are based. This evokes Uzoigwe's (1986:127) position that "the creative individual cannot create in a vacuum; *he necessarily needs a social environment in which to find self-realization* (Italics mine)."

6.2.1 Art Music Composition in the Nigerian Social Context

At this point one would question whether art music should replicate indigenous music for it to be accepted or whether the distinction between the two genres should be blurred to enable acceptance of art music compositions as having authentic cultural base and social relevance. This is not the position of this presentation. At least, the medium of expression of art music automatically imposes certain restrictions or constraints that distinguish it from indigenous music. The media for its expression are also not the same as those of indigenous music. This constrains divergence in technical features and directions in the two genres. Nigerian art music composers are not urged or expected to transcribe traditional music or repeat tradition for their works to be accepted. According to Nzewi (1997: 72) "a composer of modern African music should enable a listener to appreciate the quintessential African harmonic, developmental and textural-

structural idioms; otherwise, the composition is of no consequence to a continuum of African creative integrity.” Some such idioms are internal/cyclical development of themes, performance composition and open-ended presentational forms, linear harmonic thoughts and processes, influence of aesthetic exigencies on melodic contours, ostinati patterns, polyphonic and heterophonic textures, etc. My argument is that a composer of African/Nigerian art music based on indigenous music must synthesize the totality of what constitutes the essence of the indigenous music and present them in the idiom of his/her composition. This would entail some investigations on the type and use of harmony, melodic structures, form, rhythm, performance dynamics, contextual nuances of the performances, dance and audience roles in the performance of the chosen traditional music. Such enquiry would go beyond the concrete sounds and reach out to extra musical events and expressions that define, identify and distinguish the music types. The active social situations in a given musical presentations/contexts are critical to the work.

Such enquiry would enable the composer grasp the creative distinctions of the music as well as the idiom of its expression in the given social context which he/she would project in the art music composition. The composition would then connect directly to the social circumstances that are accepted in the performance of the indigenous music in the Nigerian social context. Thus, abstraction of musical elements of given indigenous music without harnessing all that constitute its structural/expressive features and idioms would not present to the listener a familiar social platform on which to accept and appreciate the music. Acceptance of the music will, therefore, depend on how much it presents the listener with sounds and creative expressions from the social context it is drawn.

The intention, therefore, is to motivate composers to search for creative distinctions of indigenous music or music traditions they seek to draw from and apply the creative and performance idioms in their new works (if they are designed to achieve that). Such

distinctions would be the social labelling of such music. Although very many Nigerian composers have pursued this from their various perspectives, my observation is that many of such efforts have not exploited creative features and idioms of the indigenous music in greater details.

6.3 Native air

After the period in Nigeria, new nationalistic works were given impetus by the direct yearning for home-grown musical styles that were representatives or continuum of the various ethnic cultures of Nigeria, having been given some sort of overdose of Western choral music. A vocal (choral) style that developed in direct response to this desire is the **Native Air**. The choral style explored and combined the native choral/vocal idioms of an indigenous music tradition of Nigeria and Western stylistic features in its delivery of a story song that has been supported and patronized by the Christian churches essentially. Secular versions are effectively rendered on non-religious occasions while solo versions are also incorporated. For more than forty years native air has remained a welcome alternative to the Western classical (often in foreign language) vocal works. The musical and textual themes for such works are very often “based on traditional folk songs and folk tales” (Nzewi, 1991: 144), for the secular type and on biblical or religious texts for those meant for religious observances.

The content analysis of its stylistic features and distinctions reveal consistency in the preferential use of native language, fairly long story deemed captivating for a listening audience, strong bass line, fairly contrapuntal and polyphonic lines interspersed with homophonic passages, sometimes on topical issues, strong reliance on tonal inflection, Western chordal material, functionalism of tonal harmony, sometimes retaining indigenous choral norms such as glissandi, parallelism, untranslatable syllables, vowelisations, etc. The effort however has been to remain within acceptable choral traditions established by the West. To a great extent therefore, such works are “transformations of traditional folk songs

into art songs conceived in a European contemplative idiom” (Omojola, 1997: 216). While native air is accepted by the Nigerian audience as a creative alternative, it still maintained a careful exclusion of the rich potential of the indigenous instrumental and vocal genres and their performance dynamics as resource for creative idioms in vocal music as was later developed at Nsukka. In conformity with Nzewi’s (1997: 72) and Euba’s (1987:32), argument that composers of African art music must explore and have clear understanding and application of quintessential elements and idioms of indigenous music, creative energies were focused on the development of a unique compositional style-Nsukka School of Choral Music, directly linked to the works of Meki Nzewi and Christian Onyeji who are the exponents of the vocal style. The later is credited with popularising it and motivating greater application of the style by student-composers. Such works which appear in solo and choral forms belong to a genre I call *African vocalism*. This is similar to Euba’s *African Pianism* (see Uzoigwe, 1992: 63; Euba, 1993: 8) but for the voice.

6.4. African Pianism

8.4.1. Origin

African pianism developed over a period of creative search for a new approach to modern African art music composition in general and for the piano in particular, by African art music composers of the later part of 20th century. Stimulated by the creative efforts of the second generation of Nigerian and other composers, Akin Euba felt the need for an all-embracing concept that would capture the creative aspirations and efforts of African art music composers’ emerging styles. Thus, while the term *African Pianism* was first used by Akin Euba to describe his works, it subsumes existing and combined nationalistic efforts of many African composers for a creative expression that captures the African spirit. According to Uzoigwe (1992: 63), “Akin Euba, from 1964 onwards, began to seriously explore what he regards as the “African/percussive aspects of the piano...Euba was at the time beginning to develop

the idea of an ‘African pianism’, a style of piano playing which is as distinct as jazz pianism or a “chopinesque pianism”. In an article entitled “Traditional Elements as the Basis of New African Art Music” (Euba, 1970c), Euba wrote, 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.

The nature of the fusion that could be made, as suggested by Euba above, may not be as important as the creative distinction and approach of African Pianism. It is also not as important as the understanding of the creative concept and its application in varied musical expressions. At what point in history Euba finally accepted the concept of African Pianism is now a mute point but it appears his first work to capture the creative essence of Africa Pianism is ¹*Wakar Duru: Studies in African Pianism*, nos. 1-3 (1987). Before this set of compositions however, he had written *Igi Nla So* for piano and four Yoruba drums in 1963, in pursuant of the fusion he mentioned in his article of 1970.

To support his creative vision of African Pianism in the year of the composition of *Wakar Duru*, Euba stated in an article that:

some of us are so preoccupied with producing symphonies, faithful to the European classical styles, that we are oblivious of the “symphonic” potentialities of African traditional ensemble music. Others are intoxicated with the pop music culture of America and remain ignorant of African rhythms,

¹ *Igi Nla So* means big tree blooms. It was used by Akin Euba when he discovered the possibility to use the piano to express African experiences. *Wakar* is Hausa (a tribe in Nigeria) word for song and *Duru* is Yoruba word for piano or organ.

whose danceability will outsell the most commercial disco from America (1987:32).

He also argued that

an intimate knowledge of the theory and practice of traditional music is a key to the discovery of new creative and performance techniques based on African models (Ibid: 32).

These statements support the conclusion that the concept was given adequate conceptual/critical thought before its manifestation at the creative level. The concept also draws from Euba's global perspective of the African world of music. It was developed by Euba and endorsed by other African composers. Having given the background to the concept of African Pianism, it is appropriate for me to turn now to the definition of the concept as presented by the composer.

8.4.2 Definition

The concept of African Pianism loosely laces together emerging compositional styles on the African continent for the piano as well as those of African Diaspora composers that seek to explore idiomatic and inherent features and elements of African traditional music for an art music composition. According to Euba,

One of the concepts arising from the practice of African composers is that which I describe as 'African pianism'. The concept is primarily defined by the keyboard music of African composers but also includes the piano works of non-African composers in which African elements are featured...Africanisms employed in neo-African keyboard music include (a) thematic repetition (b) direct borrowings of thematic material (rhythmical and/or tonal) from African traditional sources (c) the use of rhythmical and or tonal motifs which, although not borrowed from specific traditional sources, are based on traditional idioms (d) percussive treatment of the piano and (e) making the piano 'behave' like African instruments (1993:8).

Although the above is rather descriptive, “The basis of African Pianistic style is the adaptation of performance techniques from instruments like xylophones, thumb pianos, plucked lutes, drum and chimes to the piano” (Anri, Zaidel, Onyeji 2003: 159). According to Aponte (2000: 16), “African pianism then, is a discourse of identity, of difference, of confrontation of the other.” Linda Bauman-Hall (2000: 8-10) argues that “African pianism should be placed in the international context of ‘Oral-tradition keyboardism’ such as ‘Italian fixed bass keyboardism’, ‘French lute-style keyboardism’, ‘Hungarian pianism’, ‘Spanish folkloric keyboardism’, ‘Burmese pianism’, and ‘New Gamelan pianism’. Significant in this argument is the existence of a distinct mode of pianistic expression that is rooted in the performance idioms and creative norms of African musical instruments which evokes and supports Euba’s aspiration for a distinct pianistic style.

7. My contributions to African Art Music Composition Based on Indigenous Paradigms

Inspired by the need to root my creative output in the African/Nigerian cultural and creative principles as have been pursued by some of the Nigerian composers, I intentionally sought for unique and creative ways of applying the idioms and elements of indigenous music of Nigeria in a manner that I would operate more from the inside rather than from the outside. By this I mean, incorporating some Western idioms into the indigenous creative platform. I sought for unique and resourceful approach that would not only represent the new spirit of African art music composition but that which was truly anchored on the unique creative idioms and values of African indigenous creative models while at the same time achieving international acceptance. It was crucial for me to develop, through research, a framework for identifying that which belonged to African indigenous music necessary for the creative work as against the mere lifting of any material or mere assumptions on the matter as has often been the case. It was performance for me to develop uniqueness in my creative engagements

by such explorations. The result manifested in both vocal and instrumental genres that are discussed here. This presentation would however, only serve as introduction to these creative styles. Detailed analytical discourse would not be of great value here as most of them have been fully discussed in other writings prior to this. For this purpose therefore, the creative styles and their examples are highlighted. The three major styles/genres are the **Research-Composition, Drummistic Piano Composition** and **African Vocalism**.

7.1 Research-Composition

This is an approach to composition in which in-depth ethnomusicological research on the indigenous music of a given culture informs the creative and compositional theory of a modern art music composition. The approach seeks a continuum of traditional musical arts of Africa in modern art music form (Onyeji 2002: 1). It is a compositional process that enables a composer to produce African art music of any length or magnitude by the study and application of creative elements and idioms from identified African musical type or tradition. The procedure entails ethnomusicological study of identified music type (ethnographic and musicological) that enables the identification of distinctive features of the music type as well as the application of the creative features and idioms in the composition of art music of choice. The essence is to ensure that the art composed music captures the spirit of the indigenous music while at the same time is a transformation of the music in literary form. Research-Composition identifies the distinctions that exist between ethnomusicology and composition as scholarly and creative fields in music but at the same time constructs a bridge from one to the other. This enables closely-knit relationship between the two. (see Onyeji, 2005, Research-Composition: A Proposition for the Teaching of Composition from the Traditional music Perspective. *Emerging solutions for musical arts education in Africa*. Herbst, A. (Ed.), Cape Town: Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE), pp. 250-266).

The desire to demonstrate the use of the theoretical and stylistic resources of indigenous music to produce new music of international relevance and creative originality motivated the search for an approach. This is to counter the thinking that mere insertion of a melody from a folk song represents African art music. It also demonstrates the path to the dissection of a given indigenous music for the distillation of its creative elements, idioms and dynamics for a creative work. This, unquestionably, creates a palpable link between the new work and the indigenous music that it is based on. Abigbo for symphony orchestra was my first attempt at this style. My personal desire to document the principle of **research-composition** based on Igbo music for the benefit of interested scholars and researchers gave additional motivation for this work. In other words, it was my desire to contribute to modern African composition as an ethnomusicological process.

It could be said that a combination of sheer interest, inspiration from existing works and the desire to contribute to the creative continuum of indigenous (Igbo) music through a definitive method (research-composition) together motivated the work. It was also necessary to convey a framework that could be applied in composing art music from the Nigerian stand-point for the benefit of younger composers. Thus, this is a perspective for African art music composition based on indigenous music paradigm.

It was my intention to contribute authentic literature, theoretical contents, creative procedures and performance practices on the fast changing or otherwise disappearing music types of Africa. This is to popularize as well as advance indigenous African music knowledge in new contemporary form by adopting literary documentation and presentation techniques. The Abigbo composition demonstrates that indigenous music knowledge can constitute the creative model for African art music, if analyzed and understood. This work subscribes to the yet inchoate research-composition advocacy in music studies.

The following working scheme/method and techniques were used in this work and is also the projection for further application of the approach by others.

The process starts with ethnomusicological fieldwork. This is followed by the transcription and analytical study of the chosen music. The ethnomusicological study entailed fieldwork for audio (or visual) recording through participant study, interviews and observation. An ethnographical discourse on Abigbo music with the musicians formed a critical part of this. Thereafter transcription and analysis was undertaken.

An original composition for an intercultural symphonic orchestra was undertaken, applying the idioms and elements of the Abigbo choral-dance music. A musicological analysis of the new Abigbo for orchestra also followed to highlight the applied elements from the traditional music.

The knowledge background for this work relied more on indigenous knowledge from Abigbo musicians and from Igbo musical theories and philosophies. In addition, this approach ensured that authentic and reliable indigenous musical knowledge that is not foreshadowed or influenced by Western musical thought is projected.

The orchestra is made up of a selection of some Western orchestral instruments (piccolo, flutes 1 and 2, clarinet, horn in F, B flat trumpet 1 and 2, trombone, timpani violin 1 and 2, viola, violon cello and double bass), and some African (Igbo) music instruments (medium size membrane drum, rattle, small twin bells, medium size metal bell, knocker and brass bell.) There is also a choral part for male voices. Conscious attempt was made to capture the creative and performance idioms of Abigbo music in the orchestral work.

The second movement has a choral part necessitated by purely aesthetic reasons.

The above is a background statement aimed at giving the work a theoretical frame that serves as a guide to the compositional approach. The following are presented as necessary steps in the application of research-composition to modern art music composition by composers.

The first step would be to decide whether the art music composition is to be based on a specific African indigenous music type or whether it would use generic African compositional idioms and principles. The latter approach would entail clear understanding of the principles and idioms and the ability to apply them in the new music composition. The former approach would entail the following procedure:

- a) Identify or decide on the particular music to be used, bearing in mind the compositional intention.
- b) Undertake fieldwork on the music and musicians in the traditional context, in order to collect necessary formal-structural data on the music, as well as the musical and socio-cultural factors of creativity informing the performance of the music in society.
Follow up field works would be necessary to authenticate the data already collected and studied.
- c) Conduct laboratory study of the data, which would normally include transcription and analysis of the music in order to identify the characterizing features, its idioms as well as the compositional techniques.
- d) Determine the relevant features and characteristics of the traditional music to be used in the art music composition.
- e) Apply the selected features of the particular traditional music type/style in the new work. This would entail exploring the new medium as a factor of the creative continuum.
- f) Evaluate the new work vis-à-vis the traditional music, through a concert audience.

Research-composition is currently being employed in creative and doctoral works internationally. I have examined such thesis in University of South Africa (UNISA).

25

Picc.
Fl. I
Fl. II
Cl.
Hn.
Tpt I
Tpt II
Tbn.
Timp.
Memb. drum
Knck.
Ratt.
Twin bell
Single bell
Brass bell
Bar.
Vln I
Vln II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

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7.2 Drummistic Piano composition

Linked to the creative efforts of African composers is the concept that though interconnects with Euba's broad African pianism concept, defines specific creative approach to African art music genre for the piano. The notion of the piano as a percussive instrument is the basis for constant creative exploration of the instrument from other interconnecting creative concepts to African Pianism. One of such developments is the concept of **Drummistic Piano Composition**. This concept, specifically, highlights the potential of the piano as a drumming instrument. In my study of the instrument I found very close relationship between the piano and the performance behaviours of drums of Africa. Stimulated by the works of Uzoigwe and myself I attempted a theoretical discourse of the concept in IJME 26(2) (2008) as an approach to teaching piano composition in Africa, emanating from the strong drumming tradition of sub-Saharan Africa.

The drummistic piano style is an approach to piano composition and performance that transfers the techniques of African drumming to the piano. "Drummistic piano compositions, basically, transfer the melorhythmic principles and idioms of African drum music to the piano" (Onyeji, 2008: 164). Its basic tenet is synthesizing the creative and performance idioms of traditional African drums (wooden or membrane) in art music composition for the piano. As such, it represents a conscious effort to capture the sonic and idiomatic features of traditional drum music for the piano. The approach entails perceiving, responding and relating to the instruments as one would to normal traditional drums. Ultimately, it entails drumming on the piano. My "Ufie", "Oga", etc belong to this sub-category of African Pianism. The techniques of its composition, its idioms and elements drawn from African music have been fully discussed that further elaboration would not be necessary here. Below is the opening of the 3rd movement of Ufie for piano. This style is currently being explored

internationally. Works in this style are also appearing in international concerts.

'UFIE' (IGBO DANCE) FOR PIANO

THIRD MOVEMENT

Christian Onyeji

Fast Ritimico

8^{va}

6 (8^{va})

2

f

13

8^{va}

20

7.3 African Vocallism

African Vocalism loosely laces together emerging vocal compositional works within and outside Nigeria that seek to explore idiomatic and inherent features and elements of African indigenous music for an art music composition for the human voice in unique ways that relate to the examples developed at

Nsukka. The basis of this vocal style is the adaptation of performance techniques from indigenous vocal and instrumental ensembles and the synthesis of the idioms, performance behaviours and dynamics of such ensembles in the composition of a vocal piece of music. Simulation of Africanism for the voice lays emphasis on the element of rhythm, percussive sound, dance, fragmented melodic style, cyclic motives, thematic repetitions, linear textural organization and tonal organization that characterize most African ensemble music. These manifest in the deployment of tones, melody, rhythm, melo-rhythm and harmonic structures; conscious efforts to transfer the roles of ensemble instruments to the voice in art music form, simulation of drum passages as well as dance and multilinear polyphony normative in traditional ensemble music.

Some of the creative features of the choral style are the dominant use of ostinato variation as a canvas on which music of considerable length is constructed in a variety of moods and textures. The ostinato which could be in the form of repetition of the main theme, often serves as a unifying force in the composition. Harmonic structures of some of the works do not rely entirely on or vigorously pursue European classical functional harmony. In some instances too the element of communal-performance is evoked to enhance the contrapuntal and polyphonic textures. This element gives the impression of many layers of sound in operation at a given time.

African vocalism seeks to develop a tradition of original art music for the voice that draws from the totality of African traditional musical and vocal idioms for its creative expression. Such works that are projected to liberate the creative faculty from the severe limitations of mere folk song arrangement for singers is referred to as “African Vocalism”. This is similar to Akin Euba’s concept of “African Pianism” but is essentially for the human voice. In such works greater attention is paid to the distillation and synthesis of identifiable African vocal/choral music norms and traditions in the

composition of songs that are unmistakable continuum of African indigenous music. (See Onyeji, 2006, *Composing Art Songs Based on Igbo Traditional Music: Concept and Process in Contemporary Times*, *Nigerian Music Review* Vol. 6, 27-46).

A development from this creative pursuit is the **Nsukka Choral School (NCS)** of vocal music composition. Akin to Uli School of Fine and Applied Arts also developed at Nsukka (Irivwieri, 2010; Smith, 2010), the concept of Nsukka Choral School draws creative resources and energy from the totality of vocal and instrumental idioms, norms and dynamics of indigenous music of Africa. Intensive ethnomusicalogical enquiries on indigenous music by Nzewi and Onyeji provided creative data as well as creative inspiration for the composition of works that belong to this style of choral music. The two scholar-composers are the exponents of the choral style. While Nzewi provided the inspirational nucleus/model of the creative style, I provided the creative platform for the blossoming of the style through my compositions and frequent performances of works in this style in the various groups I directed and in other commissioned works. Consistency in the application of this choral style as well as direct motivation of young student-composers enabled consolidation of this style and its framework. Noticeable in recent times is the greater and excited application of the creative style by student-composers and graduates of Nsukka. It is evident that the style has taken root and could become an acceptable model choral style that is a clear departure from the Western classical choral music and its Nigerian version, the native air. Student-composers that have utilized this style of choral composition are Odo, Vitus; Onokere, Solomon; Ezugwu Innocent; Benedict Agbo; Eze, Austin-Mary; Hillary Eze; to mention but a few.

To achieve the creative intentions, scale structures and tonality found in African indigenous ensembles are sometimes used. Harmonic structures of some of the works do not rely entirely on

or vigorously pursue European classical functional harmony but explores harmonic (polyphonic/contrapuntal) structures of indigenous ensembles. Simulations of roles of ensemble instruments are generally a prominent feature. Quite often, motivic ideas are derived from rhythms that are closely associated with identifiable indigenous ensembles. Composers also strive to organize notes or tone rows in a manner that enables them to derive the speech-tone flavour and percussive sounds that characterize some African musical ensembles in order to realize indigenous African melodic and rhythmic depth. In addition, most of the works in the choral style favour the linear style of part writing akin to fugal or canonic works. Element of dance is dominant in the basic metric pulse of such works. This is enhanced by deliberate utilization of additive rhythms and staggering movements in rhythm. Known melodic themes from indigenous repertoire are sometimes evoked in the works. In some instances too the element of communal-performance is evoked to enhance the contrapuntal and polyphonic textures. This element gives the impression of many layers of sound in operation at a given time.

This, is thus, a creative musicology that strives to harness the creative potential of African music for the development of a Nigerian creative “voice” in choral music based on certain perceived affinities and performance relationships of the human voice and African musical instruments. Such creative dualities are perceived as extension of the potential of the human voice as an adaptable instrument. This notion of the human voice as versatile instrument is the basis for constant creative exploration of the instrument from broad and interconnecting creative concepts such as *African Vocalism*.

Appearing in choral and solo song forms, African vocalism is a creative style/genre that is currently being explored and studied by students of composition and musicology within and outside Nigeria.

My New Direction

Algebraic Compositional Process (ACP): My new creative and research focus is currently on the exploration and development of a creative process that has close affinity with compositional thought and practice in Indigenous Africa which I call the Algebraic Compositional Process. Drawing from a mathematical concept, ACP maintains a loose structural procedure but with firm and organic content that combines the element of uncertainty with a quantitative balance similar to a thematic recycling in a normal indigenous music performance. Thus, the ACP is a compositional process that captures the unknown creative pattern but structures it in a realizable number as in a normal algebraic equation such as $(n^2+p^5+x^3)$. The letters represent the unknown musical patterns while the coefficients represent possible cycles of their appearance in given contexts. Still in the process of full crystallization, this approach to art music composition, based on indigenous musical paradigm, will be given a definitive discourse in the near future.

8. Recommending the Creative Process of Research-Composition/Conclusion

Having noted the current creative situation and the need for a paradigm shift in African distinctive styles in various musical forms, it is pertinent to make some suggestions. One is the need for the younger generation of African composers to take up the challenge and strive for creative identity as well as present authoritative and valid framework for composition that could be universally applied. Global identity politics must not be ignored by African creative minds if African music must have a place in the global creative context.

Closer attention should be paid to the creative potential of indigenous music of different cultures in Africa if Africa must present a new horizon in world music. At least, such music possesses unique and Africa-specific creative norms and idioms that, if harnessed, would at once give exclusive identity to the music form(s).

The younger generation of African composers have the duty to discuss their creative activities and possible style(s) that may be of interest to other composers, irrespective of what other people may think of them. That way, a creative style may crystallize and be accepted. Research-Composition, Drummistic piano style and the Nsukka Choral School models are recommended for application by the generality of the younger generation of Nigerian composers owing to their successes and international application.

This discourse presents a brief survey of African art music composition in the context of emerging creative styles based on African indigenous musical paradigms. An in-depth survey of the creative styles of African art music would entail a larger volume quite outside the scope of this presentation, hence, this is an introduction. However, it is evident from the foregoing that the new compositional styles are hinged on Africanization of the music art rooted in the creative theories of African indigenous music as made manifest by creative master musicians. The proposition emphasizes detailed study of African indigenous music to enable knowledge and extraction of relevant creative elements and idioms for the composition of African art music. In order to achieve a creative fusion of African indigenous and European musical elements, composers should not engage in tokenistic use of African musical materials but to have African indigenous materials in greater abundance through appropriate research engagements. Such works can authoritatively be cited as having evoked the essence of the music culture they are based on as well as the idioms in new forms. This would be in the harmonic style, use of tonality and choice of sounds, relationship of the parts, performance and contextual dynamics, simulation of dance, element of drama and communal performance, interpretation and aesthetic features, etc. I am unequivocal that a composer should not repeat tradition in the process but should draw from the palpable idioms of indigenous music resources for the composition of original music that though rooted in the indigenous music it is

drawn from, is yet independent of it. This philosophy of African art music interconnects with and as well is in correlation with the views of many leading African art music composers and musicologists. The choral style has motivated younger generation of Nigerian composers who now apply the Nsukka choral style in their compositions. It could be summarized that composing African art music based on indigenous paradigms produced Research-composition, Drummistic Piano style, African vocalism (Nsukka Choral School), among other African style, that have played significant and pivotal roles in the shaping of the creative directions of student-composers and some others to the point that a gradual but consistent propagation cum acceptance of the styles is evident. Endorsement of the research-composition framework, a stylistic distinction based on African indigenous paradigm, is valued as significant to the development of Africa's creative identity in art music composition.

9. Acknowledgements

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