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Dayo Oyedun's Compositional Style: An Analysis of *Cathedral Anthem I*

Bello, Abayomi Omotoyosi, PhD

Abstract

This paper discusses Dayo Oyedun's compositional techniques and his arrangement of indigenous anthems for churches in Nigeria and beyond. The presentation is based on primary and secondary sources in form of interviews, participant-observation, analysis of musical scores and review of related literature. Oyedun composed six anthems for choirs, but this study is limited to his Cathedral Anthem. The findings reveal that he used the verse-anthem form as a compositional technique for his anthems rather than the lyrics-anthem form. He usually applies simple accompaniments that can be performed by amateur choirs and musicians that lack professional training. They also show that his anthems are composed for special church occasions, sometimes on request, and they are as well performed during regular services as special renditions when the seated congregation can enjoy the performance. One other point that makes this compositions more acceptable is the fact that some are known tunes like "Kpo ya Chukwu" but technically rearranged to make it more sophisticated. The study suggests that more efforts should be done on collection, notation and documentation of indigenous music for use in our various churches, schools and for posterity.

Keywords: Oyedun, African anthem, lyrics-anthem, verse-anthem, known tunes.

Introduction

AN ANTHEM IS A FORM OF CHURCH MUSIC, PARTICULARLY IN THE SERVICE OF the Church of England, in which it is appointed by the rubrics to follow the third collect at both morning and evening prayer sessions. The words are selected from Scripture or in some cases from the liturgy, and the music is generally more elaborate and varied than that of psalm or hymn tunes. Anthems developed as a replacement for the Catholic "votive antiphon" commonly sung as an appendix to the main office of the Blessed Virgin Mary or other saints. In common usage among many Protestant churches, an "anthem" often refers to any

short sacred choral work presented during the course of a worship service. In the context of an Anglican service, an “anthem” is a composition to an English religious text. From this widening usage has come the more modern sense of the word.¹

Early anthems tended to be simple and homophonic in texture, so that the words could be clearly heard. The word “anthem” is today commonly used to describe a celebratory song or composition for a distinct group, as in the term “national anthem. The term “anthemic” is a modern word coined to describe music with a celebratory connotation.² The rising profile of anthems composed or arranged by both trained and untrained musicians in church worship represents a major way through which Christianity continues to respond to the cultural needs of local worshippers. The writing of original compositions was preceded by translations of Western hymns into indigenous languages. Such translations often lead to the distortion of African languages, many of which are tonal, a problem that numerous authors, including Agawu and Omojola, have discussed.³ Some of such works which have stood the test of time is the translation of the Great Halleluyah by Rev. B.G. Kwami of Ghana in 1934⁴ and Yomi Daramola’s⁵ version in local languages (Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo).

After a while, African composers began to replace some of these western hymns with new original works. In Ghana, for example, Ephriam Amu championed a new African style that would inspire a new generation of composers of church music. On Amu’s model, Nketia wrote:

It has been regarded as a standard form by many composers. It breaks away from traditional music by using the framework of S.A.T.B. and four-part harmony in combination with African rhythms in which alternating duple and triple effects predominate...It is conceived without percussion accompaniment even though it may make use of percussive effects or rhythmic figures derived from drumming in the accompanying vocal parts. Its phrases are generally not related to a fixed time line pattern as we find in traditional music.⁶ (Nketia, 1974).

In the process of providing alternative forms to the western musical styles in African churches, composers like the Rev. J.J. Ransome-Kuti composed native lyrics as alternative to European hymns, while T.K.E. Phillips composed a Yoruba chant for singing the vesicle and canticles. Different types of anthems began to spring up in Christian denominations in different parts of Nigeria, but one of the earliest models was the lyrics anthem form that was employed for new and original compositions in Yoruba language. As Vidal⁷ observes, such compositions were often accompanied with drumming, gongs and beaded calabashes. African anthems could be lyrics or art form. Lyrics anthems are written in the tonic solfa

and composed usually by those who lack professional training in music. Art anthems are written with more sophisticated compositional skills.⁸

Oyedun's anthem is therefore classified under the art-anthem category and written strictly for use during church special programmes. It is composed to serve various purposes in the church, covering variety themes, including, praise and thanksgiving, worship, and the glorification of God. The words are selected from Biblical text and the music is generally elaborate and stylistically varied in ways that differ from chanted *psalms* or *hymn tunes*. All the six anthems composed by Oyedun are for trained *choirs* and not for the congregation; even though the regular performance of such anthems in churches has made the popular and familiar to several congregations. These six anthems are listed below with the year of composition:

- a. *Cathedral Anthem I* (2000)
- b. *Cathedral Anthem II* (2000)
- c. *Cathedral Anthem III* (2001)
- d. *Cathedral Anthem IV* (2002)
- e. *Festival Anthem I* (2003)
- f. *Festival Anthem II* (2003)

Oyedun's anthems are composed for special occasions, sometimes on request, and they could be performed during regular services and as special rendition for a listening congregation.

Cathedral Anthem I

This comprises of three songs titled as follows:

- 1. "Kpo ya Chukwu"
- 2. "Obangiji"
- 3. "Tiwá tópé"

Kpo ya Chukwu was rearranged by Oyedun for a performance during a revival programme at Oritamefa Baptist Church, Ibadan. "Obangiji" and "Tèmi tópé" are his original music composed in Yoruba as special anthems for weddings. These anthems are regularly performed during special occasions in his church and other churches around Africa.⁹

Some Structural Features of Cathedral Anthem I

Polyphony:

Oyedun enjoys compositions that are polyphonic in nature, where one could hear several parts combined contrapuntally. An example of such is found in his song "Tiwa tope" from measure 4 to 11 as shown below.

Ex. 1: Tiwa t'ope

Polyphony homophonic:

A sound texture involves the concurrent combination of two or more voices where the melody stands out and other parts varies, either in chordal, rhythmic or melodic accompaniment. This occurred in few places in the song "Kpo ya Chukwu", for example, measures bars 1 to 34 as illustrated in measures 9 to 12, Ex. 2 below. The melody started with soprano, which was taken over by alto in bar 7, while other parts provide a melo-rhythmic accompaniment.

Ex. 2: Kpo ya Chukwu

Modulations:

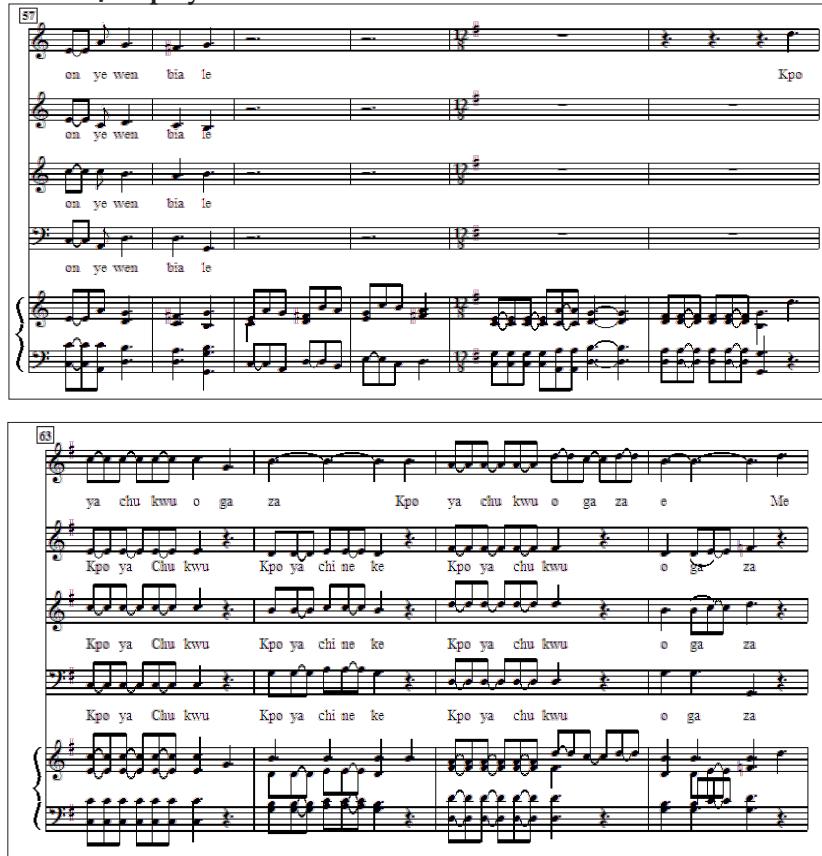
The change from one tonal key to another in the course of a section or within a short often helps to energize to Oyedun's compositions. The simplest and most natural modulations are to the related keys. Such modulations could be prepared or abrupt. An abrupt modulation is illustrated in the excerpt below from the song "Tiwá t'ópē" where the modulation occurred in bar 67 without prepared notes or passages (Ex. 3). Bar 67 is marked with the asterisk sign below.

Ex. 3: Abrupt modulation

Metric modulation:

This occurs when there is a change in the rhythmic content from one section to another within a particular composition. It does not necessarily reflect a change of metre. The excerpt, "Kpo ya Chkwu," changes in bar 61 from a compound duple to compound quadruple, that is from 6/8 time to 12/8 time. There was an observation of a four-bar rest in the vocal parts from bars 59 to 62, while the piano accompaniment keeps playing. The metre changes in bar 61, as shown in Ex. 4.

Ex. 4: "Kpo ya Chukwu"



Metric Modulation

This category of music compositions is sacred as performed in churches. Findings show that two musical textures predominate in the songs collected, namely homophony and polyphony. These musical textures are structured into solo, duet and four-part compositions. Furthermore, the songs are basically written in the heptatonic or western diatonic scale with frequent modulations to other

scales. There can be as many as three modulations within six bars. The harmonic structure is predominantly western. In addition to frequent modulations within short musical phrases, other features of Dayò Oyedun's compositions include highly syncopated rhythms and speech-like declamatory notes. In addition, the singing parts are conceived to be rendered in the bell canto vocal style.

In addition, while some earlier African art music composers based their music mainly on Yorùbá folk tunes or existing melodies, especially folksongs¹⁰ Oyedun's art anthem are mostly composed with original melodies, based on Biblical texts, while their song-texts are in indigenous African languages.

Conclusion

African art music composers over the years had mostly been music scholars especially from the second generation till date. And while we have had several scholarly studies on such composers, composers like Oyedun who lack professional training are really studied. My discussion in this chapter represents an important contribution that helps to redress this imbalance. Oyedun's compositions, which uniquely hinged more on practical experience, has attracted significant appeal amongst church congregations because of their unique meditative quality, the use of indigenous text, and, of course, their Biblical themes. As shown in this discussion, Oyedun's compositional preference is for the lyrics-anthem form. His goal has been to write for amateur choirs and instrumentalists who lack professional musical training, hence his preference for simple piano accompaniments. The also shows that his anthems are composed for special occasions, specifically in the church, and sometimes specially commissioned. Some are however written to be performed during regular services as special renditions for a contemplative congregation.

END NOTES

1. See Bello, Abayomi. "Dayo Oyedun in the context of the fourth generation African art music." PhD thesis, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 2014.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Agordoh, A. A. *Studies in African Music*. Ghana: Accra: New Age Publication. 2004, p. 50.
- 5 Davidson, A. T. *Church Music: Illusion and Reality*. London: Harvard University Press. 1952
- 6 Nketia, J. H. The Typologies of Ghanaian Contemporary Choral Music. *International Library of African Music. South Africa*. 1974. p. 4

- 7 Vidal, A.O. Selected topics on Nigerian Music. Obafemi Awolowo University Press, Ile-Ife. 2012.
- 8 Ọmójolà, Bode. *Yoruba Music in the Twentieth Century. Identity, Agency, and Performance*. University of Rochester Press, USA. 2012.
- 9 *Cathedral Anthem* has been performed either in part or fully by the following church choirs, all in Ibadan: Orítaméfà Baptist Church Choir; Christ Apostolic Church Àgbálá Ìtura Choir; All Soul's Church Choir, Bódijà; Methodist Cathedral Church Choir, Elékùrò; St. Paul's Church Choir, Yemetu; Christ Apostolic Church Choir, Mókólá; Christ Apostolic Central Mass Choir; St. Peter's Cathedral Church Choir, Arèmò; Christ Life Church Choir, Àkóbò; and New Life Baptist Church Choir, Olúbàdàn.
- 10 Nzewi, Meki. Ese Music: *Notation and modern concert presentation*. Iwalewa Haus, Universität Bayreuth 1990, p. 50