

“*ARIWO KÓ NI MUSIC, EMPTY BARREL LÓ N PARIWO*”: A DISCOURSE ON YORÙBÁ MUSIC AS A COMMUNICATIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE ART



**Stephen OLÚSOJÍ Ph.D.,
Grace OLÁOLÚWA Ph.D.,
& Ségun ODÙSORÒ**

Abstract

The Yorùbá of Nigeria and diaspora are regarded as people who cherish their cultural practices, give a place of pride to music as an indispensable part of their heritage and use music virtually in all their social, secular and communal activities. In their quest to promote and entrench their worldviews through music, they give several connotations to it. These meanings are sometimes connected with or derived from its medium of transmission, mode of interpretations, taboos, regulations and others connected with its practices in the society. The major task of this study is to examine the means of transmitting music in the traditional and contemporary Yorùbá society by investigating its communicative and contemplative medium in promoting core Yorùbá philosophical values and how these messages are effectively communicated to the people. The study used ethnographic methods which involved library and archival method, participants-observation, chats to elicit information. Findings from the study revealed there are compositions that are exclusively contemplative in nature for intent listening while others of a vigorous, boisterous nature are for entertainment, social occasions and other activities of the Yorùbá. The paper also examined and found out that. Yoruba Indigenous music as well as art work uses and serves both contemplative and communicative functions. The study concludes by recommending that more documentation should be done by musicologists to

preserve the various musical genres from going into extinction and to make their research available for the propagation of music education.

Keywords: Yorùbá music, Contemplation, Communication, Art.

Introduction

The indigenous Yorùbá as well as the contemporary ones have incorporated several adages, invectives, salutations, derogatory words, wise sayings; coded words sometimes intermingled with musical tones, and others that have one connection or the other with music into their social as well secular music. The medium, mode and various pastiches, styles of transmitting this music varies from passive to somber, melancholic to the boisterous, energetic, panegyric, to elegiac, while sometimes diverse musical typologies embracing combinations of eclectic styles in texts and tones settings are used, the messages are well-couched, passed and well-understood by the audience (Omójolà, 2014, Olánfyan, 2001 & Waterman, 1990).

Omójolà (2014) had remarked, while discussing Yorùbá music that:

Musical practice, by its very nature is dynamic in both microscopic and macroscopic terms: Individual performances outline a dynamic temporal process in the course of their enactment; and individual musicians constantly revise their musical styles, while musical traditions change over a period of time. In all of these situations, the musicians deals constantly with the dynamics of temporal change, whether in the processual flow of a specific performance or in the longer and broader process of change within a given community (p. 10).

To the foregoing, the Yorùbá make various allusions in their daily activities to the place of music and its various usages in their day to day activities. They use music for eulogies, modifications and corrections, communications and warning of impending dangers, and other coded messages which are sometimes done in a subtle manner or in a merry and grandiose manner. Such words, coinages, musical symbolism, drums surrogates and others embedded and enmeshed into their music, in such examples as ,“*lile, lile làñ*

lùlù àgídìgbo, ológbón lón jo,òmòràn lón mòó"(a word is enough for the wise), "*Ówàñbè*"(used in the contemporary parlance to denote merryming or loud parties), "*Orin arò*"(dirge), "*ekún iyàwó*" (marriage song), "*Orin ijálá*" (hunters song) and others serves as musical identities of the Yorùbá and positively portray them as wordsmith and people of rare cultural heritage and vintage musical traditions.

Whether in the soothing, contemplative, gentle driven music of Yusuf Olátúnjì's *sákàrà* music or the caustic, energetic, boisterous music of Àyìnlá Omowúra's, or the philosophical Ebenezer Obey's *mílíkì Jùjú*, the danceable Sunny Ade's *àrìyá Jùjú* and soothing well-couched Ayò Bánkólé's classically inclined "*Àdúrà fun àláfíà*", the Yorùbá's interpretations and meanings of music as a contemplative and communicative art are realized. The following questions are to be interrogated in the study: 1) Do the Yorùbá have musical types that are for contemplative listening? (2).What communicative functions does Yorùbá music serve in the society? (3).Do contemporary Yorùbá popular musicians replete various styles in their music? (4).What elements from indigenous contemplation music are fused into Yorùbá art works by composers? (5).When does sound become music or noise in the Yorùbá understanding?

This study intends to engage the questions through the investigative lens of the formalists and absolutists views on the place of a work of art, music inclusive in which a work is interpreted through meanings derived from it and its contents. This is further buttressed by studies conducted by Olsoon (1998) and Finnas (1989) on musical preferences, which they believed are influenced by individual variables such as, 'age, gender, and sociocultural background as well as by specific characteristics of the music, and by the listening situation'.

The Functions of Music in the Yorùbá Society

Music plays several roles in the traditional and contemporary Yorùbá societies. These functions vary according to societal dictates, approval and disapproval of its medium, mode of transmission and others that governs its operation, such as the: performance prescriptions, sacrosanctity and permissibility. For instance, in most Yorùbá societies, it is a taboo to play loud and deafening music where a young person is being mourned, buried or

to play a dull drab, funeral song in a celebratory occasion that requires loud entertaining music. How then can we define music as a communicative and contemplative art? Hamzat (2017), opined that:

Songs serve functional purpose. Entertainment (*ìdáráyá*) comes first among the goals of performance. However, the use of song for therapeutic, psychological, and emotional well-being is exemplified in lullaby, a kind of poem or song used to soothe children to sleep. Adults also listen to music to fall asleep. It can calm disturbed nerves and it is used to cure psychological problem. It is effective for the emotional wellbeing between lovers. The use of songs in fanning the ember of discord is also rampant. It can incite groups and individuals against each other. Songs are used to celebrate wars and death (p.163).

Musical functions are multi-dimensional in an egalitarian, and polarized societies as the Yorùbá, whose musical taste as discussed earlier are eclectic and moods just as in all human races are ever-changing and reacts to situational stimulus, events, happenings, economic, social, religious and others in its immediate environment. As the Yorùbá proverbs says, "*Ohun tó kojú sé nìkan, èyìn ló kó sé lo Mû*" (literarily interpreted as, "The more you look, the less you see"). The Yorùbá reacts to the communicative and contemplative roles of music both in the traditional and contemporary societies in diverse ways and derived their meanings and interpretations from its contents reacting with various emotional empathies and moods - joy, sadness, celebration, obeisance, propitiation and others. A cursory look at the selected pieces below will give ample interpretations to some old as well as contemporary Yorùbá songs and what they intend to convey to the people.

S.N .	Title of Music	Artiste/Sourc e	Communicative and Contemplative Meanings.	Performance prescriptions
1.	<i>Láíyé olúgbón</i>	Traditional folk	Historical information, records of important rulers, epics, myths etc.	Performance could be boisterous and energetic.
2.	<i>Ó di ghere, Ó dàrìnàkò, Ó tún do jú àlá.</i>	Traditional dirge.	Folk, traditional dirge where rite of passage and elegiac elements are emphasized.	Solemn, Melancholic, i n a mourning mood and gradual processions.
3.	National Census 1973.	Àyínlá Omowúra.	Eulogy, historical information and records.	Energetic, fast driven music typical of Omowúra's <i>Àpàlà</i> music.
4.	<i>Èyìn tìn perí wa sáída, a mò yín O .</i>	Hárúnà Ìshòlá.	Sarcasm, Caustic and philosophical music.	Gentle moving pace with swaying rhythm of the dance exemplified in Ìshòlá's <i>Àpàlà</i> music.
5.	<i>Olórun mǐ, iwo nǐ mǎa sìn títí aiyé.</i>	Comfort Omógè .	Eulogy, Praise and Adoration to the Almighty called several names in the Yorùbá pantheon e.g. <i>Olódùmarè, Olórun</i> etc.	Intricate rhythms spiced with ìlǎje instruments and rhythms.

6.	<i>Omo pupa ò, Omo pupa là wán fe.</i>	Victor Oláiyá.	Entertainment	Contemporary highlife styles.
7.	<i>Bí pépéye bá jòkúta, Omi nío fi su.</i>	Káyòdé Fášholá.	Philosophical and indigenous sayings.	Easy moving <i>Jùjú</i> highlife.
8.	<i>Ire Mbò.</i>	Jossy Friday	Eulogy.	Energy Sapping beats and easy flowing dance of the <i>Ègbádò</i> .
9.	<i>Àimàsikò lón dàmu èdà, òrò mi lówó Olúwa ló wà.</i>	Ebenezer Fábíyí Obey.	Motivation, Encouragement and Prayers.	Easy patterns typical of Ebenezer Obey's <i>mìlíki Jùjú</i> style.
10.	<i>Ó Wolé olongo kéri.</i>	Yusuf Olátúnjì.	Traditional folk and Eulogy.	Sombre in easy flowing rhythm, for intent listening and appreciation.

However, it is not just in folk and contemporary popular music that the contemplative and communicative idioms of Yorùbá music are well pronounced. Omójolà (2017) discussed that a new contemplative tradition was pioneered and promoted by Nigerian musicologists who studied music formally and use 'European- derived notation and performed in a concert tradition' (Omójolà, 2017), and elsewhere, Olúsojí & Faseun (2021) also analysed the thoughts, works and interpretations of Yorùbá art music composers and their works. Some examples of Yorùbá art music below may suffice as music for serious intent listening and appreciation.

S.N.	Title of work.	Composer	Communicative and Contemplative Meaning	Performance Prescriptions.
1.	<i>Àdúrà fún àláfà.</i>	Ayò Bánkólé	Supplication, Prayers and Intercession.	Moderate speed. A regular underlying piano ostinato with a well-balanced melodic lines for the singer.
2.	<i>Olúségún, Àjàségún.</i>	Dayò Dédeké	Asking for God's intervention in a troubled society	In a supplicatory mood.
3.	<i>Akínlà.</i>	Felá Sówándé.	Highly contemplative instrumental composition based on western classical concepts of music for the concert hall. Theme based on a well-known Yorùbá folk melody ""Oní dodo, Oní móinmóin"".	Lively.
4.	<i>Olúrómbí</i>	Akin Eúbà	For symphony orchestra. Folk derivative theme developed in western classical style and form.	Lively.

5.	<i>Bàbá Mímó, Má fì wá fún yà je.</i>	Bòdé Omójolà.	Supplication and Entreating.	Slowly.
----	---	------------------	---------------------------------	---------

The tables above shows that a combination of compositions in both vocal and instrumental idioms would serve communicative and contemplative purposes to give and have impact on the people whether the works are indigenous, popular, contemporary and art, each serves its purpose in the Yorùbá society and have dedicated followers and audience.

Conclusion

'*Ariwo kó ni Music, Empty Barrel ló n Pariwo*' literally translates as 'music is not noise only an empty barrel produces noise'. This portrays the definitive function of Yorùbá music as both contemplative and communicative. '*Ariwo kó ni Music, Empty Barrel ló n Pariwo*' is a metaphor that depicts the functionality of every Yorùbá music use in the society, which in its elemental forms and styles fulfill a purpose to its hearers and performers alike. Every Yorùbá music has its use, this holds true for some African musical culture too. Musical art in the Yorùbá society should be viewed in the context of the performance as Yorùbá music is performed in the context of art works for living, or for life's sake and could be contemplative as well in the sense of art work for intent listening. This article through its musical examples from the works/music of Yorùbá musicians and composer across various genres and styles have been able to reveal the dichotomy of communicative and contemplative Yorùbá musical types as functional, contextual and not '*ariwo*' (noise). The study therefore, suggests strongly that a repertory of Yorùbá musical works (vocal/instruments) in various genres should be studied indepthly by music students and scholars. The documentation of this music would not only serve to preserve the Yorùbá musical culture for posterity but allow for a true appreciation of the knowledge base of Yorùbá music on a national and global pedestal.

References

- Finnas, L. (1989). How can musical preferences be modified? *A Research Review Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*. 102.1-58.

- Hamzat, S. A. (2017). Songs. In T. Fálolá, & A. Akínyemí, (Eds.), *Culture and Customs of the Yorùbá*. (159-168), Austin-Texas: Pan African University Press.
- Oláníyan, O. (2000). The Musician and his audience. In B. Omójolà (Ed.), *The Performer: Journal of the Performing Arts*. 2 (1), 152-160.
- Olsoon, B. (1998). The social psychology of music education. In H. David & A. North (Eds.). *The Social Psychology of Music*. (290-305), London: Oxford University Press.
- Olúsojì, S. & Faseun, F. (2021). *Emi ni won wi?: A discourse on socio-musicological contents of Yoruba art music*. In F. Abiodun & A. Nwamara (Eds.), *A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Isaac Ovarhabome Idamoyibo* (397-410), Association of Nigerian Musicologists.
- Omójolà, B. (2014). *Yorùbá Music in the Twentieth Century*. University of Rochester Press.
- Omójolà, B. (2014). *Popular Music in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: IFRA.
- Omójolà, B. (2017). Music and dance in culture and performance. In T. Fálolá, & A. Akínyemí, (Eds.), *Culture and Customs of the Yorùbá*. (407-419), Austin-Texas: Pan African University Press.
- Waterman, C. (1990). Chicago: *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music* University of Chicago Press.

Discography

1. Fášholá, K (n.d.). *Bí pépéye bá j'òkúta, Omi ní o fi su*. TYC25.VOL.2.
2. Omowùrà, A. (n.d.) National Census 1973. NEMI(CD)0002
3. Omógè, C. (n.d.). *Olórun mi, Ìwo ni máa sìn tíí aiyé oo*. Rock of Faith Record Co.
4. Friday, J. (n.d.). *Ire Mbo*. AMRSL 02.VOL. 6.
5. Oláiyá, V. (n.d.). *Omo pupa*. Evergreen Musical Company.

Appendix**Musical Example 1****ADURA FUN ALAFIA**

Ayo Bankole

O lo run mi mo tun wa sa gbe si o mo wa
gba du ra mo lo run mi mo tun wa ba ba

Musical Example 2**Aima siko**

Ebenezer Obey

Ai ma si ko loun da mu e da o O ro mi l'o wo O lu wa lo wa

Musical Example 3**BABA MIMO**

Bode Omojola

Ba ba mi mo ma fi wa si le o O ba mi mo ma fi wa si le o I wo
lo wi pe ka ma sin o, a be o ye O lo run
ma ma fi wa si le ba ba mi mo ma fi wa si le

Musical Example 4**Olorun mi, Iwo ni ma sin**

Comfort Omoge

O lo run mi i wo ni ma sin ti ti ai ye o a min o

Musical Example 5

OLUSEGUN Dayo Dedeke

O lu se gun a ja se gun

i pon ju a ye po jo wo te te de o

Musical Example 6

Laye Olugbon Anonymous
Traditional folk

La ye O lu gbon mo ke bo run me je e o ma ko yi lo rin, La ye a re sa mo ke bo run me

fa e o ma ko yi lo rin, La ye A la bi e mi ra ko ko mo

ra ran mo ra san yan Ba ba so a fo le, lo le pe ile yio dun a fo le e yi dun to tia