

# CHAPTER 8

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROFESSOR AGATHA ONWUEKWE'S *NWANNEM* AND PROFESSOR VICTOR UWAIFO'S *JOROMI*.

Mabel Ugochi Okpara (PhD)

### **Abstract**

This paper presents documentation and a comparative analysis of Agatha Onwuekwe's *Nwannem* and Victor Uwaifo's *Joromi*. Folksongs have been indispensable tools for the upbringing of African children and for character formation hence the need to document them for posterity. These two folksongs in Igbo and Bini languages respectively were notated and comparatively analysed in this study using Dan Agu and Joshua Uzoigwe's compositional considerations in the analysis of African songs while Weld's theory of comparative analysis was used as the theoretical framework for the study. This study will be of great benefit to students of African music and Music Composition. The library research method was used to obtain information for the study. From the findings made, conclusions were arrived at and suggestions were made for the way forward.

**Keywords:** Composition, Arrangement, African music, Folktales, Folksongs, and Analysis.

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### **Introduction**

#### **The Indispensability of Song Preservation**

According to Ekwueme (2005: 322), “songs in oral tradition were practised and learnt by listening and imitation. This was initially the only method of preserving African songs through oral tradition.” As a result of technological advancement, electronic storage devices were invented

with which to record songs to preserve and retrieve them.

The notation has an edge over the oral tradition and the electronic storage devices because scored music lasts for centuries as in the Western pieces of the historical periods which are still accessed and performed today with their qualities still intact. Electronic devices crash with time and also, our elders who teach these folksongs through oral tradition are gradually passing on hence the indispensability of notating them for posterity. Sadoh (2010:32), observes that "although Thomas, Ekundayo Phillips claims to have written three short pieces, for organ solo, there are no scores or music notation for them." This shows the inevitability of scored music in its preservation. The researcher in this study scored *Joromi* to preserve it and to serve as a reference material for scholars of music in terms of studying and performing it for accuracy. The scored version of Agatha Onwuekwe's *Nwannem* was also used for this research.

### **Daniel Weld's Theory of Comparative Analysis**

This theory provides a framework for the comparison of two concepts or ideas as follows: clear formulation of the problem, presentation of techniques that solve comparative analysis problems, providing explanations suitable for use by design systems, detailed comparative analysis, introducing of similarities and differences, taking advantage of the strengths and weaknesses of each, diagnostic and explanation-based generalization. (Weld S. 1990). The researcher did a comprehensive comparative analysis of Onwuekwe and Uwaifo's works employing Daniel weld's theory of stating the suitability of the approach, detailed study of both works, their similarities and differences, diagnostic, problem solving, analytical and descriptive approaches.

### **Folktales**

Folktales are traditional didactic stories of any community which are held in high esteem because of their corrective and educating values and are passed on from generation to generation. In the words of Asante. (2005: 102), "folktale is a universal ageless genre of traditional stories of a communal society which are passed down to its younger generation. Folktales are seen and held like a cherished property of a communal society." The researcher in this study, notated Victor Uwaifo's composition, *Joromi* whose text was adapted from a Bini folktale and also used Agatha Onwuekwe's score of her folksong arrangement *Nwannem* for the comparative study.

### **The Efficacy of Folksongs in Nation Building**

Kennedy and Kennedy, (2007: 206), define folksong as, "songs of unknown authorship passed orally from generation to generation which forms part of their integral life." With the definition of folksong above, its significance in forming an integral part of a people confirms its efficacy in nation-building. Emeka, (2002: 205), emphasizes that, "Igbo traditional music emphasizes character formation and starts early to expose the young to those values, behaviours, attitudes, speech, traditions, considered necessary to the making of persons in a given environment."

Ajewole (2011: 169) also states that, “music is concerned with the development of a complete being.” A nation that is capable of producing and developing citizens who are complete beings in terms of character formation through the exposure of her members to her traditions, values, behaviours, beliefs etc is worthy of emulation. This expresses the effectiveness of folksongs in nation-building. To buttress these assertions, Ofuani (2011: 46), adds that, “while song entertains, it intrinsically informs. Songs have been people's watchdogs, disciplinary and objects of caution and ridicule that challenge some addressed individuals to re-examine their objectionable lifestyles.” Here, Ofuani emphasizes the usefulness of folksongs in the transformation of the lives of citizens through monitoring, rebukes, caution and other disciplinary measures thereby producing useful citizens in a given nation.

Arukwe & Chukwu (2012:39) frown that, “today, we are in the eclectic generation of computer music which avails wonderful opportunities for creating wonderful pieces. But unfortunately, many practitioners of this era are responders to profit and audience fancy, rather than moralistic and character-moulding milieu to inconsequential, vulgar, and culturally devastating texts that corrupt the populace, especially the youth.” This is at variance with the role of folksongs in nation-building. The two folksongs of study, *Nwannem* and *Joromi* are educating, informative and corrective songs which are suitable for teaching some important lessons to members of society.

### **Professor Agatha Ijeoma Onwuekwe**

Professor Agatha Onwuekwe who was born in 1953, hails from Uga by birth and is married in Ekwulobia, both in Anambra State. She holds two Doctorate degrees in Music Theory and Composition as well as in Educational Management from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (UNIZIK) respectively. She is a composer, saxophonist, pianist and educationist. She has several journal articles both at local, national and international levels to her credit. She is currently a Professor of Music at UNIZIK and has also served in different capacities as the Head of the Department of Music and as an Associate Dean in the Post Graduate School, (UNIZIK). She is married and blessed with children. (Source: A paraphrase of an oral interview of Professor Agatha Onwuekwe).

### **Professor Victor Efosa Uwaifo (1941-2021)**

Professor Victor Uwaifo who hailed from Bini was born in Benin, Nigeria on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1941. He was one of the first prominent Nigerian highlife musicians. He was not only a musician but also a Professor (a PhD holder in Sculptor), a writer, a one-time University of Benin lecturer, and a musical instrument inventor, (the guitar) to be precise, with which he often did a 360 degrees' rotational demonstrations, a guitar prodigy who played the instrument with much dexterity and improvisations. He played his guitar, both pop and Western art compositions such as Bach's *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* with ease. He was a flautist, a trumpeter and a composer. He

was the first Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Tourism in Benin. He was also the first musician to receive the National merit award of the Order of the Niger. (MON). He died in the year 2021 at the ripe age of 80 years. (Source: paraphrased from Njoku, B. (August 2021). Vanguard <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/08/all-you-need-to-know-about-Victor-Uwaifo>).

### Translation of Agatha Onwuekwe's *Nwanne m*.

*Onye oh, nwannem*: Refrain: *o nwayaya nwayaya nwayaya nwayaya nwaya o nwayaya nwaya*  
 Who is there my sister: Refrain: *o nwayaya nwayaya nwayaya nwayaya nwaya o nwayaya nwaya*  
*Ijeoma o, nwannem*: Refrain Ijeoma, my sister, Refrain  
*Umu nne gi di oleU* Refrain How many siblings do you have? Refrain  
*Umu nnem di ise*: Refrain I have five siblings. Refrain  
*Onwu egbule umunne gi*: Refrain Your siblings will not die. Refrain  
*Onwu egbule nna gi*: Refrain Your father shall not die. Refrain  
*Onwu egbule nne gi*: Refrain Your mother shall not die. Refrain  
*Onwu egbule nke gio*: Refrain Yours shall not die. Refrain  
 Note that the refrain is untranslatable.

### Translation of Victor Uwaifo's *Joromi*.

Call: *Ghe-gh-iguo-na-fe*: Don't wrestle with this.  
 Refrain: *Joromi o mi jo* (the name of the Warrior)  
 Call: *Umie-mwan-gbon-ne-o*: You have seen a lot on earth, Refrain  
 Call: *Umie-mwan-gbon-ne-o*: You have seen a lot on earth, Refrain  
 Call: *Erin-mwi-nu-ghiri-ee*: You are now proceeding to the afterworld. Refrain  
 Call: *Erin-mwi-nu-ghiri-ee*: You are now proceeding to the afterworld Refrain  
 Call: *Kruu kese kese/kisi kisi*: This is an onomatopoeia ie untranslatable which simply depicts the sound of blows during wrestling Refrain

### Structural Analysis of *Nwanne M* and *Joromi*

*Nwannem*: Bars 1-8 is a piano introduction or an opening while in *Joromi*, bars 1-16 is an instrumental introduction or an opening of the music with the drum set, sekere (rattle), woodblock, and the keyboard. In *Nwannem*, the alto solo entry or call is followed by a 6-bar refrain while in *Joromi*, bars 17-22 contain a tenor solo entry (Call) with a three-part Refrain. The first entry of the tenor voice with a melodic line in *Nwannem*, is in bars 17-24 and an exact repetition of bars 9-16, with the same refrain while in *Joromi*, bars 23-52 have the tenor solo which comes in with different melodic lines with the same response. In *Nwannem*, bars 25-32, contain a new melodic fragment which appears with the same refrain while in *Joromi*, bars 53-144 contain a long instrumental interlude with the same musical instruments following. In *Nwannem*, bars 33-40 are a modified repetition of bars 25-32 while in *Joromi*, bars 145 to end are an exact

repetition of the whole music without modifications. In bars, 41 to the end of *Nwannem* are various slight modifications of the first melodic line with the same refrain.

Melody/ Form: Both *Nwannem* and *Joromi* are in Call and Refrain form.

*Nwannem*



*Joromi*



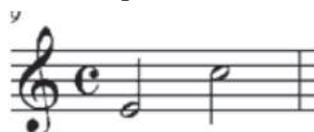
Phraseology: Regular four-bar phrasing between the call and the Response with an anacrustic opening in the tenor solo voice (bars

Refrain

In *Nwannem*, there is no overlapping between the Call and the Refrain while in *Joromi*, there is evidence of overlapping between the Call and the Refrain. (Entry of the solo before the end of the Refrain) as shown below in *Joromi*.



*Nwannem*: The range is E, 1<sup>st</sup> line to C, 3<sup>rd</sup> space, a minor 6<sup>th</sup>.



**Joromi:** The range is from middle C to 2<sup>nd</sup> line A (Interval of a compound major 6<sup>th</sup>)

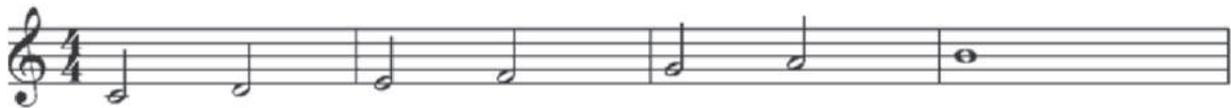


Tessitura: This refers to the note with the highest frequency. In *Nwannem*, E, 1st line occurs 56 times with the highest frequency while in *Joromi*, 1st line A occurs 29 times in the melody and therefore has the highest frequency. In *Nwannem*, the scale mode is a pentatonic scale while *Joromi* is built on the heptatonic scale as shown below.

*Nwannem:* Scale mode is a pentatonic scale (5-tone scale).



*Joromi:* Scale mode is heptatonic scale (7-tone scale)



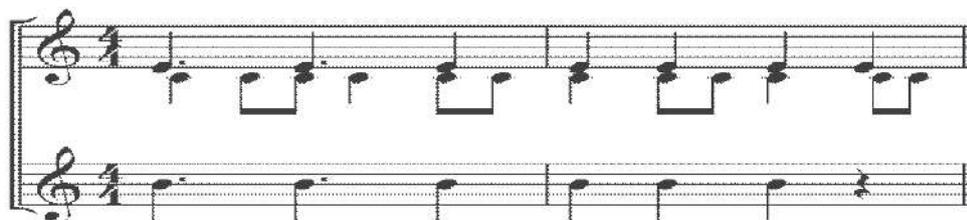
The motif in *Nwannem* is shown here:



*Joromi:* Motif is in tenor solo as shown here:



Texture & Medium: *Nwannem* is an alto solo voice piece with piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment is mainly homophonic with a few bars of polyphonic textures while in *Joromi*, the texture is a tenor voice solo piece with a three-part vocal harmonic refrain in parallel 3rds and 6ths. See bars 17 to 22 of *Joromi*. It also has instrumental accompaniments as; Keyboard in homophonic texture, the jazz guitar has some melodic lines and improvisations while the drum set and sekere (rattle) provide different ostinato effects, and the woodblock brings in some polyrhythmic patterns which give contrasting effects with the sekere as shown below:



The bass guitar plays the same bass melodic line throughout *Joromi* as shown below:

The Bass Guitar line



The tempo is moderato, to be taken at moderate speed in both *Nwannem* and *Joromi*.

Meter: *Nwannem* has a regular meter of  $\frac{6}{8}$  time while *Joromi* also has a regular meter of  $\frac{4}{4}$  time. *Nwannem* begins on the strong beat from the piano introduction of the music to the end while *Joromi* begins with an anacrustic beat with sequences and extemporizations in the jazz guitar's initial entry and most of the different melodic lines as shown below:

A jazz guitar anacrustic beat with extemporizations and sequences

*Nwannem*'s piano intro starts with a strong beat



Style: Both *Nwannem* and *Joromi* are tonal, and both are in key C major

### Discussion of Findings and the Way Forward

Both *Nwannem* and *Joromi* are folksongs. Agatha Onwuekwe did an arrangement of *Nwannem*, an Igbo folksong with piano accompaniment and Victor Uwaifo set *Joromi*, a Bini folktale to music. *Nwannem* is an outpouring of God's blessing of the longevity of life to families ranging from parents, siblings and all members of each family. This is worthy of emulation. The Bible enjoins us in **Romans 12:14**, "to bless and curse not". (King James version).

*Joromi* on the other hand is a folktale which Victor Uwaifo set to music and which tells the story of a wrestling warrior, *Joromi*, who defeated all his folks in his community. Out of overzealousness, a show of self-importance and arrogance, he attempted to fight the evil spirits of the underworld contrary to the warnings by the elders of the land because of its unpalatable consequences. He ignored the cautions of the elders and went ahead to fight the evil spirits, but unfortunately for him, he did not return to tell the story of his encounter with the forces of darkness. This is likened to the case of Goliath who puffed off because of his natural endowment with physical strength but was defeated by little David, the anointed in a battle. (1 Samuel 17:41-52). The Bible tells us that, "it is not by power or might but by the Spirit of God." (Zechariah 4:6). "By strength shall no man prevail". (1 Samuel 2:9). "God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6). "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which thy Lord giveth thee." (Exodus 20:12). *Joromi* dishonoured his elders and died untimely. This is a corrective message which enjoins us not to be over-enthusiastic or pride ourselves in life affairs as *Joromi's*

stubbornness and disobedience sent him to an early grave and his destiny was cut short. This is an indication that folksongs are educating, informative, corrective and also entertaining.

From the structural analysis of *Nwannem and Joromi*, it was discovered that both composers combined Western instruments in the accompaniments of their music but strictly maintained the African flavour in terms of call and refrain, repetitions, use of untranslatables, regular phrasing, anacrusic entries (in *Joromi*), extemporizations in both in the accompaniments and the main body. In a bid to meet the taste of our audiences, we are encouraged not to deviate from the original homegrown music in our African music compositions and arrangements. The study established that the music *Joromi* is of the Afro-pop genre and was composed beautifully with significant characteristics of African and popular musical styles blended smoothly with local and Western instruments with the African flavour intact.

Agatha Onwuekwe who is an educationist did a fantastic job in her arrangement of *Nwannem* which teaches morals. Her piano accompaniment marks it as a very interesting reference material for Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools' music pedagogy in Nigeria. As the children sing in unison, the piano accompaniment gives it a satisfactory blend in texture which no doubt, children of such age brackets will appreciate and learn the ethics, values and doctrines of the people from. This piece is recommended for use in Nigerian Nurseries, Primary and Post Primary schools especially the Igbo schools.

Victor Uwaifo also did a great job to meet the tastes of all his audiences whether blacks, whites, the young, the middle-aged, and the old by creating an interesting blend of the African style with pop style giving rise to the Afro-pop variety in his *Joromi*. His guitar improvisations in this work as a guitar guru give the impression of African rhythm as is common with most African music. His incredible play with the guitar at 360 degrees cycling in the air without missing the timing of the music or the guitar falling as seen in his videos has endeared him in the hearts of his numerous audiences, their ages or races notwithstanding. This made his performances end with very loud ovations and rounds of applause. This piece has gone beyond the shores of Nigeria to other nations in terms of performance but has no scores hence the scoring of *Joromi* to preserve it and to immortalize Victor Uwaifo, the composer who is now late.

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## APPENDIX

**JOROMI**

By: Victor Uwaifo  
The method by Ucheofor Olu Joromi O.

The musical score for 'JOROMI' is presented in a multi-staff format. The instruments and voices included are:

- Obesa No
- Shakere
- Wood Blocks
- Lead Guitar
- Bass Guitar
- Tenor Solo
- Soprano
- Alto
- Tenor
- Keyboard

The score is written in 4/4 time and includes a tempo marking of ♩ = 90. The music is arranged in a traditional Nigerian style, with the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor) and instrumental parts (Lead Guitar, Bass Guitar, Keyboard, Obesa No, Shakere, Wood Blocks, Tenor Solo) all contributing to the overall sound. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system containing the vocal and instrumental parts and the second system containing the keyboard part.

2

6

Dr.

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo

S.

A.

T.

KBD

Dr. *II*

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo

S.

A.

T.

KBD

4

17

Dr.

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo  
e-ri kwa na fe e-ri kwa na fe

S.  
Jo-ro - mi o - mi - jo Jo-ro -

A.  
Jo-ro - mi o - mi - jo Jo-ro -

T.  
Jo-ro - mi o - mi - jo Jo-ro -

KBD

23

Dr.

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo

S.

A.

T.

KBD

u fe le gbo me o\_\_\_ u fe le gbo me o.

mi o - mi - jo Jo - ro - mi o -

mi o - mi - jo Jo - ro - mi o -

mi o - mi - jo Jo - ro - mi o -

The musical score is written for a 12/8 time signature. It features a complex arrangement of instruments and voices. The drum parts (Dr., Shek., W.B.) provide a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The guitar (J. Gtr.) and bass (Bass) provide harmonic support. The vocal parts (T. Solo, S., A., T.) are the central focus, with lyrics in Igbo. The keyboard (KBD) part provides a harmonic accompaniment. The score is divided into measures, with a 23-measure mark at the beginning of the first system.

6

28

Dr.

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo  
e gu ri gu ri ye e gu ri gu ye

S.  
mi - jo Jo-ro - mi o - mi - jo

A.  
mi - jo Jo-ro - mi o - mi - jo

T.  
mi - jo Jo-ro - mi o - mi - jo

KBD

34

Dr.

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo

S.  
Jo - ro - mi o - mi - jo

A.  
Jo - ro - mi o - mi - jo

T.  
Jo - ro - mi o - mi - jo

KBD

8

40

Dr.

Shek.

W.B.

J. Gtr.

Bass

T. Solo

S.  
mi - jo Jo - ro - mi o - mi - jo

A.  
mi - jo Jo - ro - mi o - mi - jo

T.  
mi - jo Jo - ro - mi o - mi - jo

KBD

**NWANNE M**

Arranged by Agatha Onwuekwe

Musical score for *Nwanne M*, arranged by Agatha Onwuekwe. The score is in 6/8 time and marked *Moderato*. It features a voice line and a piano accompaniment.

The score is divided into systems, with measures 1, 5, 9, and 13 marked at the beginning of each system. The piano part consists of a right-hand melody and a left-hand accompaniment.

The lyrics are:

O - nye o nwan - nem. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. o nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.



*Awamem, O Awaya*

*Arr. Agatha Onwuekwe*

17

O - nye o nwan - nem. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

21

nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

25

I - je - o - ma o nwan - nem. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

29

nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

*Nwanni, O Nwayaya* *Arr. Agatha Onwuekwe*

33 U-mu n-ne gi di\_o - le? O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

37 nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

41 U-mu n-ne m di\_i - se. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

45 nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

49

49 O-nwu\_e-gbu-na\_u - mu n - ne gio. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

53

53 nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

57

57 O-nwu\_e-gbu-na nna gio. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

61

61 nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

*Nwannem, O Nwayaya*

*Arr. Agatha Onwuekwe*

65

65 O-nwu\_e-gbu-na nne gio. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya - ya.

69

69 nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya. O nwa - ya - ya. nwa - ya.

73

73 O-nwu\_e-gbu-na\_n-ke gio. O nwa-ya-ya. nwa-ya - ya. nwa-ya - ya.

78

78 nwa-ya. O nwa-ya-ya. nwa-ya. O - nye nwa\_nnem.