

# CHAPTER 43

## THE EARLY PERIOD OF CHORAL ART MUSIC COMPOSITION IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION PROVINCE OF THE NIGER, NIGERIA: 1930-1960

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### Abstract

Many scholars have written on the general development of art music in Nigeria, as well as on the Igbo land but have not narrowed the study to the Anglican Communion, Province of the Niger, Nigeria. This paper, however, limits its study to the Anglican Communion, Province of the Niger, Nigeria and focuses on the early period of the development of choral Art music composition from 1930 to 1960. It also documents some of the compositions of the composers that existed during the period, as well as the backgrounds of the early composers. The researcher employed a bibliographical method and analytical study of the compositions of the early composers for data collection. The study hinges on the theory of development as freedom as propounded by Amartya Sen in 1999 and concludes that choral Art music composition in the Anglican Communion, Province of the Niger, Nigeria, has developed to a high level of sophistication and has gained wide acceptance among the worshippers.

**Keywords:** Development of choral art music, Composition, Anglican Communion and Province of the Niger.

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### Introduction

The Anglican Church in Igbo land was established in 1857 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from England, led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther, in collaboration with the Igbo slaves in Freetown, Sierra Leone. An agreement to establish a Christian missionary base in Onitsha was reached between the missionaries and the then-traditional ruler of Onitsha, Obi Akazua, and his

cabinet on July 27, 1857 (Ogunewu, 2010, Okafor, 2015). This is where the headquarters of the Diocese on the Niger, All Saints Cathedral, Onitsha, Province of the Niger is situated.

Consequently, the missionaries gave the early converts the impression that all the works of art of the Igbo people, with music and musical instruments inclusive, were fetish and should be done away with. They introduced hymn singing and chanting of psalms, which were accompanied by the reed organ (harmonium). This new form of musical expression is not expressive of the Igbo musical taste because of its strophic structure, which does not allow for adherence of the notes of the melody to the tonal inflections and speech rhythms of the Igbo translations of the hymns. The converts, however, were not so much at home with the translated hymns but had to sheepishly accept what was offered them by the Christian proselytizers. The missionaries established mission schools and Teacher Training Colleges where the early converts received a Western education, as well as music education. Some teachers and catechists that were trained in these schools had the opportunity to learn how to read tonic sol-fa notation and to play simple hymn tunes on the harmonium from staff notation (Okafor, 1976, Agu, 2002 and Okonkwo, 2006).

However, the nationalist spirit that became so prevalent in the twentieth century was also evident among the Igbo converts. They made several efforts to create indigenous music for Christian worship, though the hymns and chants were retained. Omibiyi-Obidike in Nwamara (2009) states that:

The growth of nationalism led to the development of Nigerian creative music which was a result of the revolt against European culture between 1890 and 1920 in Nigeria. Indigenous art music started with the determination of the early Christians to restructure Christianity to suit African customs and institutions where the use of native music would flourish. (p. 146)

Agu (2002 & 2012) informs that the experimentation on composing choral Art music in Igbo land started in the Anglican Church in the 1930s and gained prominence in the 1940s. choral Art music in the Province of Niger continued to develop into what is now known as contemporary choral Art music after the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) was established in 1961.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work is anchored on the theory of 'development as freedom,' as propounded by an economist, Amartya Sen, in 1999, which states that "Poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely a lowness of income, which is the standard criterion of identification of poverty." Sen explains that development concerns expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value, and improving the human condition so that people have the

chance to lead full lives. ([http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_development\\_\(humanity\)](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_development_(humanity)))

The missionaries' rejection of the music and musical instruments of the sub-Saharan Africa, of which the Igboland of Nigeria is a part, which they tagged 'works of the devil' could be seen as a deprivation of human capability. The missionaries imposed their music on the converts as the only music acceptable to God. The longing/efforts made by the pioneer composers of church music, on the other hand, marked the beginning of freedom which culminated in the development of contemporary art music in Igboland.

### **The Province of Niger**

The Province of Niger is one of the Provinces that make up the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion. It comprises nine Dioceses within Anambra State, namely: Diocese on the Niger, Diocese of Awka, Diocese of Nnewi, Diocese of Aguata, Diocese of Ogbaru, Diocese of Ihiala, Diocese of Niger West, Diocese of Mbamili and Diocese of Amichi.

The Province of the Niger, Anglican Communion, was created in 2002. It was within Province Two of the Church of Nigeria, which was created in 1997 when the Church of Nigeria was divided into three Provinces. Province Two covered the whole Southeastern region of the country before it was split. It is pertinent to note that the various Dioceses that make up Province Two and Niger Delta Province were a spin-off of the old Niger Diocese. The old Niger Diocese was created in 1920 from the Eastern part of the Diocese of Equatorial West Africa.

It was the old Niger Diocese that produced the pioneers of art songs in Igboland. According to Agu (2002), "the contemporary Igbo literary choral music, which came under experimentation from the 1930s, gained prominence in the Anglican Communion of the Niger Diocese in 1940s" (p. 82). The protagonists of Art Music in the Province of the Niger were products of the mission schools. They were educated but not in music, mainly school teachers and church teachers. The musical knowledge they had was gotten from mission schools, teacher training colleges and church choirs, where they learnt to read and write music using sol-fa notation and to play simple hymn tunes from staff notation on the harmonium.

### **The Introduction of Art Music in Anglican Worship, Province of the Niger**

According to Ekwueme (2004), the opportunity the early composers had to experiment with materials from Igbo musical idiom, to produce music that would appeal more to the Igbo people, came through the monthly evangelization carried out by the church in lieu of Evensong. "The need therefore to indigenize religious music in Igbo Christian worship gave rise to the creation of a new music genre christened '**Native Air**' by a few talented Igbo Christians in the 1940s." (Agu, 2012, p. 30). Ekwueme (2004) narrates that special seasons of the year in the church's calendar also provided excuses to break free from the strict order of the missionaries, which abhorred indigenous music and musical instruments of Igbo people and branded them as being fetish. He states:

The annual thanksgiving service was one such occasion. Villagers in rural Igbo country, almost all of whom were farmers, brought their crops as offering to God ... A traditional Igbo touch was brought to this effect. Baskets of yams, cocoyam, corn, palm produce, and assorted fruits balanced on their heads, the parishioners, especially the women, danced up the aisles to the altar where they deposited their offerings. The words of the songs were adaptations taken from the Scriptures, but the rhythm and other properties of the songs were traditionally Igbo in form and content ... Here, however, began the gradual synthesis of foreign and folk materials, instead of the initial total exclusion of the traditional Igbo music from Christian worship. (pp. 215 & 216)

Okafor (1976) informs that Mr Dan Ojukwu, who was the Headmaster of Central School, Amawbia, around 1928, and a few others like Ishmael Nwangene, began to organize music competitions with the help of students of the then Awka College (later St. Paul's College, Awka). It was during these competitions that Ojukwu and Nwangene began writing music for church use. With the access, they had to privately owned radio sets in the 1930s, and the subsequent arrival of commercial gramophone records, they began experimentation in indigenous church music. Their first compositions were not original; since they extracted the tunes of some of the G. V. Rhumba records, then in vogue, and fitted Igbo hymn texts to them. Dan. Ojukwu's *Ka Ụra Tobe Ike JisỤs* (All hail the power of Jesus' name) is an example.

*Ka Ụra Tobe Ike JisỤs*  
(All Hail the Power of Jesus)

Dan. Ojukwu

Doh is C

: .m,f | s .s :t .r' | d', d', d' :- .m,f | s .s :t .r' | d', d', d' :-

K'ọ - ra to - be i - ke Ji - sus. Ka ndị An - gel li - da.

6 | d' :r' :d' :d' :l :t | s :l<sub>3</sub> :s :m .s | f .l :l .l | s .,t :- .d'

We - pụ - ta, we - pụ - ta o - kpu n - ke E - ze bja me Ya E - z'ọ - ra.

The clergy, however, frowned at these compositions since they felt that ordinary dance tunes were being introduced into the Church. The tunes made them very angry but since they could not stop them, they anxiously waited for the return of Dr., then Mr W.W. C. Echezona, the first Igbo man to receive music education in Great Britain. (Okafor, 1976, p. 64)

More so, entirely new texts were created to fit Western hymn tunes. An example of this new development, according to Okafor (1976), is *Chineke, anyUha-arWGU* composed by the Niger Diocesan Women's Guild. Later, the early composers tried composing original melodies.

Text	Translation
<i>Chineke, ayUha-arWGUk'U</i>	Lord, we beseech you to
<i>nye ndUbtuayUhgUzU</i>	bl e s s o u r g u i l d .
<i>Doo ndUayUhile nsU</i>	S a n c t i f y o u r l i v e s ,
<i>Mejue obi ayU'h'WUhanya</i>	Fill our hearts with love,
<i>K'ayUbuU'UndUbuUnwunye,</i>	That we may be wives,
<i>NdUkwesU'UhtUkwas'obi</i>	W h o a r e f a i t h f u l
<i>Chineke, ayUha-arWGUk'U</i>	Lord, we beseech you to
<i>NUhyere ndUbtuayU</i>	Be with our guild.

This text is usually sung to the hymn tune - Hyfrydol.

### Musical Example 2

Hyfrydol

R. H. Prichard

In 1950, when W.W. C. Echezona returned from Britain, he was made the Niger Diocesan Music Director. He started organizing music seminars for choirmasters (during which he gave formal music lessons to the pioneer composers, to help them improve their composition) and singing competitions for choirs, which were held annually. According to Okafor (1976):

Echezona encouraged them (pioneer composers) and directed their attention to traditional songs, especially with reference to their relation to the tonal inflection of speech. He made them discover the difference between European harmony of the type used in hymns and Igbo harmony ... That folk harmony, unlike Western harmony, is not

vertically derived but horizontally conceived. He further taught them that the chords going under African melodies must be appropriate in rhythm and harmony to bring out the rhythmic accompaniment of the original instruments. He also showed them how to adapt fable songs to Igbo hymns. As an example, he adapted a Christmas hymn, *Bianu Ndị Okwukwe* (O come, all ye faithful) to a folk tune called *Ubuije ozi M...* The pioneers then tried more original melodies with much more understanding of what was needed. (pp. 89-90)

*Bianu Ndị Okwukwe*  
(O come, All Ye Faithful)

W. W. C. Echezona

Doh is Eb

s . m : l . s | - : s | m : d . r | m :- | s . m : l . s | - : s | m : d . r | m :-

Bja-nu, bja-nu, bja-n-d'o- kwu- kwe. Ka kpa-kpan-do a - to du a -yi.

5 | s . m : l . s | - : s | l :- | - :- | s . m : l . s | - :-

Bja - nu, bi'a - mu - lu O - nye- nwayi,

8 | f . m : s . f | - :- | m . r : f . m | - : r | d :- | - :-

Je - sus Christ O - nye Na - za - reth and so forth

See Musical Example 6 for the complete melody.

The background of the pioneer composers, resources, structural qualities and technical problems of these early compositions (Native Airs) are discussed later in this paper.

In the 1950s, another type of choral music for worship and religious activities, known as **Youth Songs** or **Choruses**, was birthed. The emergence of this genre of music was a result of the establishment of the Anglican Youth Fellowship, which was inaugurated at Nsukka in 1953 in the old Niger Diocese. After the inauguration, the group was established in all churches of the then-Niger Diocese (Agu, 1992, 2012, 2016, 2017). The people that constituted the group according to Ekwueme (2004) include all the young – in practice, adolescents and young adults and, indeed, any other person that felt young at heart. This group was encouraged by the Church to experiment with compositions of songs for worship and religious activities, and this experiment gave birth to 'Youth Songs' in 1954 (Agu, 2016). The music competitions organized by Echezona contributed immensely to the compositions of 'Youth Songs'. According to Echezona in Okafor (1976):

It was these competitions that gave birth to the composition of Harvest Thanksgiving Songs and from them sprang the Youth Fellowship Songs. These Harvest Thanksgiving and Youth

Fellowship Songs were a type of 'Native Airs' but different from the 'Native Airs' of Dan Ojukwu and Nwangene in the sense that they were more original. (pp. 92 & 93)

The 'Youth Songs' are short, repetitive, simple and easily committed to memory. They are completely affiliated with the Church in terms of texts, function and performance situation but possess qualities of the Igbo traditional choral music. Such qualities, according to Agu (2017), include the communicative power, strict tempo and danceable rhythms, use of short melodic motifs, use of notes of short durational values (mainly eighth notes, fourth notes, sixteenth notes; longer notes such as half or whole notes occur occasionally, especially at the cadential points), antiphony (call and response, call and refrain, solo and chorused refrain and mixed structural form), repetition, ostinato bass, parallel harmonic progression and shifting tonality. The songs are also accompanied by indigenous musical instruments. These songs are not notated, neither are they sung in any particular key, but depend on the vocal capability of the lead singer who intones the songs.

These new songs easily made resonance with the congregation and became easily acceptable because of the folk appeal they have made on the audience... Like traditional songs; people participate eagerly in the performance. There is no difficulty relating the rhythms of the texts to those of the melodies because the melodies adhere to the tonal inflexion of the words. (Agu, 2017, p. 35)

Examples of Youth Songs include *MeenUka Uwa mara* and *Lezie onwe gUanya* – See Musical Examples 4 and 5.

#### Musical Example 4

*Menu Ka Uwa Mara*  
(Proclaim to the World)

Doh is F

s . m : d . d | m . m : | s . m : d . d | r . r : | s . m : d . d | f . f : - d | m . m - r | - d : -

m . d : s<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> | d . d : | m . d : l<sub>1</sub> . l<sub>1</sub> | t<sub>1</sub> . t<sub>1</sub> : | m . d : l<sub>1</sub> . l<sub>1</sub> | r . r : - l<sub>1</sub> | d . d : - t<sub>1</sub> | - s<sub>1</sub> : -

Me-nu k'u-wa ma-ra, Me-nu k'u-wa ma-ra, Me-nu k'u-wa ma-ra, na Je-sus b'E-ze.

s . s : m . m | s . s : | s . s : m . m | s . s : | s . s : m . m | l . l : - f | s . s : - f | - m : -

d . d : s<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> | d . d : | m . d : m<sub>1</sub> . m<sub>1</sub> | s<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> : | d . d : m<sub>1</sub> . m<sub>1</sub> | f<sub>1</sub> . f<sub>1</sub> : - r<sub>1</sub> | s<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> : - s<sub>1</sub> | - d<sub>1</sub> : -

**Text**

*MenUka Uwa mara,*  
*MenUka Uwa mara,*  
*MenUka Uwa mara*  
*Na Jesus bUEze.*

**Translation**

Proclaim to the world,  
 Proclaim to the world,  
 Proclaim to the world  
 That Jesus is King.

*MenUka Uwa mara* is in Solo and Chorused Refrain form according to Agu's (2009) classification of forms of African music – the solo/lead singer, first of all, intones the entire song as it is, after which the chorus repeats the song as sung by the lead singer but in the case of AYF forms, the chorus is usually harmonized at the intervals of thirds, fourths, fifths and their inversions. It is important to note that the harmony above is used by the researcher to illustrate the harmonic technique employed in Youth Songs. It could also be observed that the melodic motif in the first bar continues to replicate in the subsequent bars with slight variations until the penultimate bar.

**Musical Example 5**

*Lezie Onwe Gị Anya*  
 (Examine Yourself)

Doh is G

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system contains a Solo line (treble clef) and a Chorus line (treble and bass clefs). The Solo line is marked with a 'Doh is G' box. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

*Lezie onwe gỤanya'* is in Mixed Structural Form. Bar 1 to 4 is in Call and Response, whereas bar 4 to end is in Call and Refrain.

### **Igbo**

*GỤnwokolobụ,*

*Lezie onwe gỤanya.*

*GỤnwa-agbỤghỤbụ,*

*Lezie onwe gỤanya.*

*N'ih na i maghi mgbe*

*ekere Ụwa,*

*ỤmaghỤmgbe Ụwa bidoro,*

*Ụna-akpa nganga, ewo!*

*Lezie onwe gỤanya.*

### **English**

You, young man,

Examine yourself.

You, young girl,

Examine yourself.

Because you do not know when the world was  
created

You do not know when the world began.

And you brag, *ewo!*

Examine yourself.

Many composers of Youth Songs were not known and faded quickly from memory. According to Agu (2012):

They were less advantaged in Western education. The majority of them could not pass through the secondary school level, but they are versed in various aspects of traditional music and instrumentation and acquired numerous musical skills which laid the foundation for their musical prowess. (p. 34)

Igbo composition in the Anglican Church kept developing until the late twentieth century when it got to a level of near perfection. The music competitions, special lectures and seminars organized by William Wilberforce Echezona were very instrumental to the development of literary choral music in the Anglican Church. The establishment of the Department of Music at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1961, quickened the rate of choral art music development and brought it to a high level of sophistication. This, as a result, led to the emergence of **Contemporary Choral Art Music**, which took care of the flaws found in the early compositions.

## **The Pioneers of Art Songs and Their Background**

### **I. Mr Daniel Ojukwu**

Daniel Ojukwu, who died during the Nigerian Civil War in his home town, in 1969, could rightly be regarded as the leading Igbo pioneer composer of indigenous Church music. Born in Nnewi, Anambra State, Mr Ojukwu lived at Awka around 1928, where he was the Headmaster of the Central School, Amawbia. It was then that he and some of his contemporaries like Ishmael Nwangene from Nibo, Anambra State, adapted popular G. V. Rhumba records and folk melodies and fitted hymn texts to them. They also organized singing competitions with the help of the

students of the Awka Teacher Training College (later St. Paul's College, Awka). It was during these competitions that Dan Ojukwu, Nwangene and a few others began writing music called 'Native Airs' for Church use. But, unfortunately, their first compositions were not actually 'Native Airs' since much of their tunes were borrowed from G. V. Rhumba records. Mr Ojukwu was a very talented composer who adapted some folk tunes to Church music. He played the harmonium and some brass instruments like the trumpet and cornet. A good example of a folk tune which he adapted to a hymn text is *UbUije Ozi M*, adapted to the well-known, *Madu nine ndUbi n'Uwa* (All people that on earth do dwell).

**Musical Example 6**

*Madu Nine Ndi Bi N'Uwa*  
(All People That On Earth Do Dwell)

Dan Ojukwu

Doh is F

Ma-du ni-ne ndi bi n'u-wa, Ma-du ni-ne ndi bi n'u-wa,  
to-be-nu Chi-ne-ke n'o-nu, we-re-nu e-gwu fe-be Ya, u-nu bja n'i-ru ya n'o  
nu, we-re-n'e-gwu fe-be Ya, we-re-n'e-gwu fe-be Ya, fe-be Ya,  
fe-be Yu-nu bja n'i-ru Ya n'o-nu. O-nye nw'ayi bu Chu-kwu n'e-zie,  
O-bu na-ni Ya kpu-ru ayi, O si n'a-yi bu a-tu-ru Ya, O bu O-nye n'e-nye a-yi nri.

(Written after Echezona's teaching on the adaptation of hymn texts to folk tunes)

The text is from the Igbo hymn books, old and current (*Union AbU* and *Ekpere na AbU*), numbers 179 and 149, respectively. The congregation enjoyed this hymn very much since the character of the music was in their own idiom. Mr Ojukwu's other popular hymns, which were based on G. V. Rhumba records, included *N'agafe dUka kpakpando* and *Ficha mgbachi windo k'ife ngUzU nwubata*. (Okafor, 1976)

## Musical Examples 7

### *Na-Agafe Dika Kpakpando Ututu* (Fading away like the stars of the morning)

Doh is F Daniel Ojukwu

N'a - ga - fe di - ka kpa - kpan - do u - tu - tu, nke i - he ha fu - ru na  
 a-nya-nwu. n'o-tua k'ayj g'e-si si n'o-l'u-wa\_n-ka ka ni-ri n'o-tua k'ayi  
 g'e-si si n'o-l'u-wa\_n-ka ka ni-ri I - h'e - ji che-ta, che-ta, che-t'ayi k'o-  
 lu ayi lu lu i-h'e - ji che-ta, ce-te a-yi o-lu a-yi lu - lu, ayi lu - lu.

## Musical Example 8

### *Ficha Mgbachi Windo* (Open The Window)

Doh is G Dan Ojukwu

Fi - cham - gba chi win - do, Fi - cham - gba - chi win - do, Fi - cham - gba - chi win  
 do k'i - fen - go - zj nwu-ba - ta, k'i - fen - go - zj nwu-ba - ta, k'i - fen  
 go - zj nwu-ba - ta, k'i - fe n - go - zj nwu-ba - ta, k'i - fe n - go - zj nwu-ba - ta.

### i. Ishmael Nwangene

Ishmael Nwangene was a native of Nibo in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. He was a teacher at Awka and started composing indigenous music for Christian worship in the late 1930s. He was a contemporary of Mr Dan Ojukwu.

Like Ojukwu, Nwangene's compositional materials were derived from the popular G. V. records. He also adapted folk tunes and fitted them with hymn texts. One of the most popular of his compositions is his version of *MmadU-nine ndUbi n'Uwa* which was sung congregationally.

### Musical Example 9

*Madu Nine Ndi Bi N'Uwa*  
(All People That On Earth Do Dwell)

Ishmael Nwangene

Doh is Eb

Ma - du ni-ne ndi bi n'u-wa to - be - nu Chu - ku n'a - nu - li, We - re - nu e - gwu

6 fe - be Ya, U - nu bja n'i - ru Ya n'o - nu. Ma - du ni-ne ndi

10 bi n'u - wa to - be - nu Chu - kwu n'o - nu.

#### i. Nelson Emma Okoli

Nelson Okoli was a native of Oko in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State. He was a product of mission schools established by the missionaries and one of the leading figures in creating Igbo music for Christian worship in the Anglican Church, Province of the Niger, between the late 1930s and 1940s. He was the choirmaster and organist of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Odoakpu, Onitsha and later of the Chapel at the Iyienu Anglican Missionary Hospital, Ogidi. Mr Okoli worked in the German Office as a clerk.

Ekwueme (2004) informs that:

In his heyday, it was not permitted to use African music during the actual service. But the evangelical mission was carried out by the Church once a month (usually on the first Sunday of each month) in lieu of Evensong, in an attempt to win new converts to the Church. This was a unique opportunity to employ the powers of music, especially that type of music which would appeal to the audience of non-Igbo Christians ... Mr Okoli believed in the use of songs as a means of spreading the Gospel, hence he composed what he called 'Gospel Songs.' (pp. 223 & 224)

The compositional materials Okoli used, mostly, were derived from traditional folk melodies and he arranged them in four parts. He made use of what is known as contrafactum (substituting the texts of a secular tune with sacred texts). He also composed new tunes for new texts. The texts were usually derived from the Bible or words that are liturgically meaningful. The majority of his works are antiphonal (call and refrain/chorus or solo and response). These refrains/responses were harmonized mostly in similar motion for a four-part choir. Two of his most popular songs – *Madu Nine N'Uwa* (All people that on Earth Do Dwell) and *Nye Ekene* (Give Thanks) are examples.



### **i. William Wilberforce Chukwudinka Echezona**

He hailed from Nkwelle Ogidi in Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State and was born on 18 August 1926. He was the first son of an Anglican Church Minister of Religion, Rev. Samuel Echezona, who was so much interested in music that he determined that his son would learn the art. He, therefore, bought for himself a four-octave harmonium and the *Smallwood Tutor*. And, due to a military-type of learning; the young Echezona was able to play Church hymns during family prayers in the mornings and evenings and in the Church. After his primary education, he entered the famous Dennis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS), Onitsha, where he developed his playing on the harmonium. During this period, he was able to receive a little formal training in music from Rev. Canon, D. F. C. Hawkins, who taught at St. Monica's College, Ogbunike, and the Awka Teacher Training College. At Awka, in 1944, he met Major Allen, the then District Officer for Awka, a good musician, who gave him more lessons in music. Later, he studied more advanced music theory and practice under Messrs Osotuke Johnson (organist of St. Paul Breadfruit Church, Lagos) and T. K. E. Phillips, who was also a Church organist. Later, he left for Great Britain to study Music in 1946, under the Nigerian Government sponsorship. He studied at the Trinity College of Music (1946-1950) from where he obtained the LTCL - Licentiate of the Trinity College, London; GTCL - Graduate of the Trinity College, London; and ARCM - Associate of the Royal College of Music. He studied Music in London as a contemporary of Fela Sowande. He later studied at Michigan State University, USA, from where he obtained the following additional qualifications: Master of Music (MA) and Doctor of Music (PhD) in 1963. His doctoral dissertation was titled, *Ibo Musical Instruments in Ibo Culture*.

On his return to Nigeria in 1950, he worked hard to raise the musical standards in Churches and Schools through his work in Teacher Training Colleges and with some Examination Bodies. As the Director of Music for the then Niger Diocese of the Anglican Mission, East of the Niger, which extended to parts of Rivers, Western and Northern parts of Nigeria, Prof. Echezona inspired and encouraged choirmasters and composers to use folk materials even in their compositions for religious worship. He organized annual singing competitions at Archdeaconry and Diocesan levels for the improvement of Igbo music in Christian liturgy. These competitions gave birth to the compositions of Harvest Thanksgiving Songs and from them sprang the Youth Fellowship Songs, which were a type of 'Native Airs.' He wrote *Bianu, Bianu, Ndi Okwukwe; Nunc Dimitis* (Song of Simeon), the *Te Deum Laudamus* and the *Venite* in Igbo, as well as a set of Versicles and Responses, Canticles, hymns, and a few Anthems in Igbo.

### **Musical Example 12**

## Nunc Dimitis (Song of Simeon)

W. W. C. Echezona

**Call** Doh is D

**Response**

O - nye-nw'ayi u - gbua k'I n'a - ra - pu o - ru Gị k'ọ

5 m . f : r

la n'u - do.

Dị - ka o - kwu Gị si dij.

10 s . l : s . s | f . f : m . m | r . r :- . r | s : **D.S.**

N'i - hi na a - nya m a - hu - wo nzọ - pu - ta Gị.

14 s . d' : s . l | s : f . m | r . r :- . r | s : **D.S.**

Nke I do - zi - ri n'i - ru ndị ni - le.

18 d' . d' : s . t | l . l : s . f | m . r :- . r | s : | d :- . d

I - he a - ge - kpu - ghe - re mba ni - le ọ - zọ n'e - bu - be

23 d : d | r : r | s : | m :- . s | s . f :- . r | s : s | m :-

ndị Gị bụ Is - rael. Dị - ka o - kwu Gị si dij.

Dị - ka o - kwu Gị si dij.

He effectively used broadcasting to create awareness of the musical treasures in society. It can correctly be said that he opened up Igbo music to the musically educated, even among the Igbo themselves. He was the founding lecturer of the Sowande College of Music, UNN, and his sense of mission contributed to the high standard of the programme for the training in African Music still held at that University.

Prof. W. W. C. Echezona, therefore, formed the bridge between the early pioneer composers of Church music and contemporary Igbo Church music composers in the Anglican Communion, Province of the Niger. This is because he was the first Igbo man to receive professional music education overseas, and so, when he came back, he started scientifically teaching music, encouraged others in the study of music and also helped the first pioneers to improve on their compositions of Church music. As one of the first members of the Nigerian Antiquities Commission, he pioneered the collection of Nigerian indigenous musical instruments, which later became an immense help to researchers and students of Nigerian organology. Prof. Echezona was very nationalistic in his compositions, which almost invariably exuded some Nigerian folk musical characteristics. He died as a Professor of Music at the Department he helped to found. (Okafor, 2017)

#### **i. Uzoma Asiji**

Asiji was a choirmaster at St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, Enugu, and later travelled to England to study Law. He composed canticles, anthems and secular songs.

#### **ii. Justus Ekwueme**

Justus Ekwueme was the former traditional ruler of Oko in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. He arranged a highlife tune and replaced the secular texts with sacred words. He also wrote some other short musical pieces.

### **The Resources of the Early Compositions**


The early composer's songs' melodies were mostly derived from G. V. record tunes and traditional folk tunes and the texts were taken from Biblical stories, Bible verses, canticles (*Te Deum, Benedictus, Venite, Magnificat, Nunc Dimitis*), and hymn verses from the *Ekpere na Abụ*. Examples of songs whose melodies were derived from folk tunes are Dan Ojukwu's *Madu nine ndỤbi n'Ụwa* and Echezona's *BụnỤndỤkwukwe* adapted to *Ụ bỤije ozi M* – See Musical Examples 3 and 6.

The structural design and styles of the early compositions were chorus (musical example 9), call and response (musical example 11), call and refrain (example 10), solo and chorused refrain and a combination of different forms. The songs according to Agu (2002) "were polyphonic with occasional overlapping and outstanding variations in the solo part, indicating a change of texts while the chorus remained unchanged both in words and music." (p. 83) Also, some features are characteristic of African rhythm, such as mixed rhythm (combination of triple and duple metres) and hemiola are identified in early compositions, especially in Dan Ojukwu's *Ficha mgbachi windo* and *Madu nine ndỤbi n'Ụwa*. They made use of vertical harmonies in songs written for four parts, which progress in parallel motion, at intervals of thirds, fourths, and fifths between the parts. Nelson Okoli's *Madu nine n'Ụwa* (Musical Example 10) is a typical example of a

harmonised work of the early composers. Agu (2002) informs that these songs which were sung a cappella were not harmonized.

### **The Structural Qualities of Early Compositions**

The works of the early composers were written in keys, unlike the Igbo folk songs whose melodies they adopted and which have no fixed keys but depend only on the vocal capability of the lead singer. The contour of their melodies reveals both conjunct and disjunct movements (between fourths and fifths). Although large leaps occasionally occur (between the intervals of a sixth and octave) as in the fourth and sixth bars of Dan Ojukwu's *Ficha mgbachi windo* (Musical Example 8). The ambitus of their melodies were always within an octave but sometimes exceeded it. *Ficha mgbachi windo* is an example of a song whose ambit exceeds an octave (B3-D5). Their melodies are usually simple and are easily committed to memory.

The rhythms of the songs of the early composers are usually simple. The songs mostly start with a strong beat. Syncopation rarely occurs in their songs. Their songs were also characterised by short repetitive rhythmic patterns. In Ishmael Nwangene's *Madu nine* (Musical Example 9), for instance, the rhythmic motif  which begins the music reappears three more times – See Bars 1 to 8.

The texture of the early compositions was monophonic (See Musical Examples 1, 2, 3, 7, 8); polyphonic, when antiphonal (Musical Examples 10 and 11); and homophonic, when harmonized (Musical Examples 10 and 11). Their works are either strophic (especially those whose texts were taken from the translated hymns) – See Examples 1, 7 and 9, or are through-composed.

### **Flaws Identified with the Early Compositions**

In as much as the compositions of the pioneer, composers have some features that are characteristic of African music, and which made their works appealing to the Igbo audience of their time, there are also flaws identified in their works. The major problem with the early compositions lay in the way the early composers conceived their melodies. First of all, they conceived their melodies before forcing the words to the musical notes, instead of allowing the melodies of their songs to be guided by the speech tone and rhythm of Igbo words. Agu (2002) also observed that “those composers found it difficult to choose the most appropriate words that suited the existing melodies” (p. 83). This brought about a lack of adherence of the notes of their melodies to the tonal inflection and speech rhythm of the Igbo language, which also led to a distortion of the meaning of the texts, as well as give different meanings to the texts.

A careful study of Nelson Okoli's *MadUNine N'Uwa*, Daniel Ojukwu's *Ficha Mgbachi Windo* and *MadUNine NdUBi N'Uwa* and Wilberforce Echezona's *Nunc Dimitis* reveal that in most of the bars of the songs, there is no agreement between the melody notes and the up and down movements of the speech tone. In the first two bars of the Soprano part of Okoli's *MadUNine n'Uwa* (Musical Example 10), for example, the speech intonation of *MadUNine ndUBi n'elu Uwa* should be: /, \, -, \, /,

–, –, –, \. But the phrase is wrongly intoned, thus: –, –, –, –, /, –, /, \, \. The symbols /, \, – are used to represent the three levels of speech tones in the Igbo language: high, low and mid respectively. The last two notes in bars 11 and 13, respectively, of Daniel Ojukwu's *MadỤnile ndỤbi n'Ụwa*, changed the intending meaning of the morpheme *egwu*, which can produce two different words depending on their intonation. The word *egwu* in the context of the text is intoned /, \, meaning 'fear', but the notes in bars 11 and 13 intone it /, /, meaning play or music. Agu (2002) identifies that the rhythm of some words is also disregarded in the early compositions such as *nke* and *ndỤ*. These are two-syllabic words but are treated as monosyllabic words by giving them one syllabic beat. 'N' in the Igbo language is a consonant that resembles a vowel sound, in that it can stand on its own as a syllable.

More so, the length of the early songs is very short. Agu (2002) also observes that the inability of the pioneer composers to develop their compositions to an appreciable length could be due to their limitations in the structural melodic design of the new order (European hymns) or as a result of the desire to adhere strictly to the short melodic motifs characteristic of Igbo folk songs which structural patterns they were imitating.

### Conclusion

The intrusion of the Europeans into Igbo land through the activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) brought about the Anglican Church. The missionaries imposed their religious music (translated hymns and psalms) on the Igbo converts and condemned the musical practices of the Igbo people; giving them the impression that Igbo culture is devilish. The converts sheepishly accepted what was offered them by the missionaries, in as much as they were not so much at home with the hymns, probably because of the strophic structure of the hymns that mostly inhibits the adherence of the melody notes to the tonal inflections and speech rhythms of the text. However, the efforts of the early composers, who were the products of Mission Schools and Teacher Training Colleges, established by the missionaries, to create songs that would be more expressive of Igbo musical taste led to the emergence of Choral Art Music composition in the Province of the Niger. Through the instrumentality of W.W. C. Echezona, who organized seminars and music competitions, during which he respectively taught composers the techniques of Igbo music composition and encouraged them to compose more songs based on what he taught them, and the establishment of the Music Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1961, the development of this genre of music was fostered. This development has gotten to a level of sophistication and near perfection and has equally gained wide acceptance in the Anglican Communion, Province of the Niger, Nigeria as well as world recognition.

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