

FROM TRADITIONAL FOLKTALE TO WESTERN CHORAL CONCEPT: AN INQUIRY INTO KAYODE OGUNTADE'S ARRANGEMENT OF "OMO OBA SOKOTO"

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Abstract

Recent studies have focused on the cultural exchange between traditional folk music and Western classical music which has often yielded captivating adaptations, bridging diverse musical heritages and transcending cultural boundaries. However, the adaptive ability of Nigerian composers to transform the monophonic materials of folk into the choral concept needs more scholarly attention. This study, therefore, examines the transformative journey of the traditional folk song "Omo Oba Sokoto" as it evolves from its original context into a Western choral arrangement arranged by Kayode Ogunbade. Data is drawn from oral interviews, biographical information, compositional analysis, and available literature with insights into Kayode Ogunbade's motivations, challenges, and aspirations during the arrangement process. The study revealed that elements of the folk narrative are preserved through the strategic use of vocal textures, rhythmic motifs, and harmonies that evoke the cultural context of the source material. Furthermore, the choral arrangement acts as a bridge between the traditional African folk heritage and the Western classical tradition, embodying a fusion of musical sensibilities. By exploring the convergence of tradition and innovation, this inquiry illuminates the transformative power of music in fostering cross-cultural appreciation and artistic evolution.

Keywords: *Folk, choral, Composition, Inter-acculturation, Stylistic, Traditional*

Introduction

The majority of musical activities that are prevalent in several socio-religious and other ceremonial events in modern Nigeria present the appearance of being significantly different from the indigenous and traditional folk music practices. This deviation is mostly the product of both internal dynamics and some external sociopolitical and cultural influences. A few aspects of Nigerian traditional values and lifestyles were altered and disrupted by the dramatic transformation of the society, especially as a result of cultural contacts with the West, the Middle East, and Asia, as well as by urbanization, industrialization, and religion. One such aspect is the traditional folk music's artistic expressions and patronage. As a result of these changes, a new urban socioeconomic class with new musical preferences arose among Nigerians.

Okafor (2005) noted that Nigerian music is deeply ingrained in all facets of socio-cultural life, transcending social class, ethnicity, geography, religion, language, gender, and sexual orientation. As a result, he believes that the connection between music and the average

Nigerian is one of the most potent indicators of the essence of his life. Due to the influx of many new ideas, cultures, and lifestyles into the nation, the majority of which are from Europe, America, Asia, and the Caribbean, contemporary Nigerian society has grown so fluid. This causes many of the sociocultural legacies of individuals who are forcibly uprooted from their native homes and forced to migrate to metropolitan regions to be indirectly shifted, altered, or abandoned.

As Adegbite (2006) puts it, we have entered an era of historical transformation where discontinuity prevails over adjustment. This transition currently pervading contemporary Nigerian society is seen as a threat to the survival and the continued practice of traditional folk music in Nigeria as more and more musical activities in the society tend to favour Western popular music. Folk music is now being seen mainly by young people as old-fashioned, and archaic which attracts little interest from this age group when compared to pop music. The practice of traditional folk music is therefore confined to the rural areas and the old folks whose main-stay of livelihood is primarily agriculture and livestock practice and who conscript folk music to accompany nearly all their daily activities.

Undoubtedly, one of Nigeria's most well-known vocal music composers of this era is Kayode Oguntade. His arrangements of folk music in Nigerian languages continue to be a standout aspect of his works. Several African composers, like Kayode Oguntade, have been actively blending traditional African musical elements with Western styles, such as classical, or choral music. This fusion reflects the evolving nature of African music and highlights the interplay between traditional and Western musical concepts. As an arranger and composer, Kayode Oguntade's *Omo Oba Sokoto* is the focus of this article's musical analysis, which focuses on his contributions to the growth of art music in Nigeria. It also looks at the composer's songs, which were inspired by his ardent desire to promote Nigeria's cultural legacy through his folklore arrangements of *Omo Oba Sokoto* from the northern ethnic groups in the nation, thereby fostering a feeling of shared identity among the different ethnic region.

Conceptual Framework

The philosophy of interculturalism serves as the foundation for this study's framework to promote cultural dialogue, respect for cultural diversity, fostering inclusivity, recognition of power dynamics, and cultural enrichment. This idea involves the fusion of components from two or more civilizations, and the musician or composer who creates the music typically comes from one of those cultures (Herbst, 2003). The world is a limitless cultural environment for musicians of his day, offering a wide range of opportunities for cross-cultural composition and performance activities (Omójolà, 2006). The use of Nigerian folksongs, treated to European-derived harmonic procedures, is a recurring feature of Oguntade's intercultural style. This approach is illustrated in his numerous vocal arrangements. The focus of this paper is on the wider stylistic perspectives from which he derived his approach to the setting of folksongs.

In our folkloric practices, the issue of identity has been the subject of numerous discussions. While some academics, such as Agawu (2003), Reimer (2003), and Turino (2008), believed that folk songs should be given European-derived harmonic and formal techniques to form into lengthy compositions, others think that the beauty and underlying charm of vernacular forms should be preserved in their natural state. While embellishing the songs with European-derived harmonic and formal techniques, Oguntade maintained an intermediary approach that preserved the essential stylistic aspects connected with the traditional arrangements without diluting the distinctiveness of the folk song.

Traditional Folktale as a means of Communication

Okafor (2005) asserts that music is a form of communication that transmits ideas from a source to a receiver before receiving feedback from the source and transmitting them back to the source. Songs serve the same purpose as any other kind of speech in the traditional African setting. Traditional folktales in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, can be summed up as human intent put into action to convey concepts, exhibit culture, symbolize events, interact socially, arouse emotion, and perform other related tasks (Okafor, 2005). By their appearance and performance, folktale in Nigeria is functional and has social commitments. Social commitments by implication are the involvement of the society towards achieving goals and development and the defense of its norms, values, traditions, and principles.

And because traditional folk music reflects and embodies the experiences of the people, it becomes a rallying medium to articulate these social values. Among ethnic groups, societies, and cultures in Nigeria, the power of traditional folk music is highly recognised and expressed. According to Onyeji (2005), before the advent of formal education and the two major religions in Nigeria, children and young adults in the traditional society avail themselves of the mass culture of game songs and moonlight tales which are recreational in nature, but more importantly which are used to communicate morals values of the society to them. The dramatic mode of composing these moonlight songs, game songs, and folklores by experts from escapist exploration of land other than that of daylight realities, and from the plot structures, especially those of dilemma tales, imaginative intention, all serve both corrective and training avenues of the adolescent on good behaviour.

Bakare (2019) argues that the prevalence of folktales, popular culture stories, and moonlight songs benefit the community not only as a source of entertainment but also, and most importantly, as a means of educating young adults about important value systems like reverence for authority figures and the dignity of labor. Folktales are widely used in Nigeria to teach children about appropriate behavior and the repercussions of being a bad person in society. According to Okunade (2002), the folktale tradition is a long-standing and significant component of African indigenous culture that is "inherited" or passed down orally from generation to generation. Call-and-response patterns, polyrhythm, embellished wordless phrases known as vocables, grunts, parallel intervals, and repeating rhythmic patterns are characteristics of folk songs. The incorporation of

almost all of these elements distinguishes Oguntade's folk song arrangements. Significantly, Oguntade's musical compositions, which are intended to recall traditional African musical traditions, also prominently feature these aspects. The closeness in how African and Western music are related is highlighted by the utilization of the same characteristics in the two categories. The biographical account and analysis of Kayode Oguntade's vocal arrangement "Omo Oba Sokoto" are explored in the remaining sections of this article.

Biographical Information of Kayode Akindele Oguntade

(Personal communication with Kayode Akindele Oguntade on 14th March 2023)

Family Background

Oguntade, Kayode Akindele was born on the 27th of March 1974 to (Deacon Emmanuel Adedayo and Deaconess Agnes Olapeju Oguntade) at Ikare Akoko, Ondo State. Kayode was the first son of his father's four girls and three boys. Kayode's father was a bank secretary and his mother was a schoolteacher. His mother was a chorister and her love for music prompted her to expose Kayode early to musical activities such as playing the percussion instruments (local drums, *agogo*, and *sekere*) during choir renditions.

Formal Education

In 1979, Kayode attended St James Anglican Primary School, Ugbe Akoko in Ondo State while his post-primary education was at St. John Mary's Unity secondary school, Owo in Ondo State. At St John Mary's secondary school, Kayode was influenced by his school principal, who was also his music teacher Mr. S.O. Obagaye to play the piano at the age of ten. He was also encouraged by Elder Abiodun Akindikete, the Late Mr. Idowu, and Elder Adelabu to play musical instruments and accompany his church choir in Akoko. He later attended the University of Nigeria, between 1993 -1999 for his Diploma in Music Education and Bachelor of Arts.

Professional Activities

Right from his secondary school, Kayode accompanied and taught his school and church choirs. After his secondary education, he worked at different places in different capacities between 1991 and 1993. He started as a choir director and organist at the Christ Apostolic Church, Oke Alaafia, Ikare, and also as an organist in various churches around Akoko environs. His outstanding achievement led to his school and church choirs winning the 2nd and 3rd position respectively during the 1990 state carol in Ondo State. He was also one of the organists who accompanied his choir at the 1989 Webisco International Music Concert at the National Art Theatre, Iganmu. Lagos. At the University of Nigeria Nsukka, he worked at different places and in different capacities between 1993 and 1999.

He was also a visiting organist at St. Stephen's Cathedral Church, Ikare Akoko. Kayode Oguntade later moved to Lagos where he started working with St George's Military Protestant Church, Apapa, as an Organist and Director of Music. Part of his role was to train the choir and instrumentalist in their various musical instruments, such as Keyboards, Saxophones, Trumpets, Guitars, and Percussions. He worked with Queens College, Sabo Yaba, in Lagos from 1999 - 2002. While at Queens College, He taught Music and trained the school's choir. He directed two musical productions - "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat" by Andrew Loyd Webber and "A Night in Bethlehem"

by Marco Frisina. He also taught music at Holy Child College from 2001 to 2004, while at Holy Child College, he also trained the school choir. His outstanding performance led the school choir to win the NNPC/SHELL and AISEN Choral Music Competition consecutively. He also directed the musical - "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat" by Andrew Loyd Webber. He was awarded the Certificate of Outstanding Performance for being the most consistent teacher in performance, in 2003 / 2004. He taught Music as a graduate assistant at Lagos State University and was also appointed as a piano and voice instructor at the University of Lagos between 2003 and 2005. During this period, he taught Harmony, the History of Music, and the Basic Theory of Music. He is currently the Director / Head of Music at Grange School, GRA Ikeja. At Grange School, he develops and executes most of the training, ensembles, and performances at the Primary and Secondary School levels. As a Nigerian Army Chaplain Music Consultant / Director, he organised the Nigerian Army Chaplain Choral Competition nationwide from



2009 to 2015.

Musical works of Kayode Oguntade	
Choral	
•	Ope ye o o Baba in SATB
•	Ibukun in SATB
•	Edom Shall Be Disposed in SATB
•	Praise the Lord in SATB
•	Emi Korin in SATB
•	Fi Ibukun Fun`Oluwa in SATB
•	Mura Si `Se in SATB
•	Omo to mo `ya re loju in SATB
•	Ohun yio si tan Gbogbo Re in SATB
Instrumental	
•	Grange School Song in SAT
•	Guantanamera Arranged for the Grange School Orchestra for a small ensemble
•	Nigeria Mma Mma for Recorder and Strings
•	Onidodo by Fela Kuti arr. For Grange School Orchestra in SATB
•	Omo Pupa by Victor Olaiya arr. For Grange School Orchestra

Analysis of "Omo Oba Sokoto"

'Omo Oba Sokoto' is one of the choral pieces arranged by Kayode Oguntade. It is one of the songs used to examine students' musicianship skills. The folk song on which Oguntade's arrangement of 'Omo Oba Sokoto' became popular among the Yoruba community; is narrated during moonlight storytelling. Oguntade's arrangement is for S.A.T.B. (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), with the flexible piano introduction and bass voice solo entry which suggest an interesting episode. The piano introduces the theme that

pre-empt the choral melody from bars 5 to 8 which suggests responsorial and canonic entries from bars 9 to 12, 13 to 16, and 17 to 20 to construct full four-part harmony.

Bars (1 to 4), 'Omo Oba Sokoto'

The texture of the piano accompaniment is alternating arpeggios that sustain quavers and semiquavers pitches in the right hand, while the bass part of the piano assumes a constant rhythmic pattern, which informed the composer's musical experience. Oguntade enacts a responsorial vocal texture from the unison singing to form polyphonic and homophonic textures. Below is the concept used as introductory material in the bass voice part.

Thematic feature I

Bars 5 to 8, excerpts of the bass voice introduction

Thematic feature II

Excerpt of the soprano voice part (O-mo-o-ba-so-ko-to)

Melody

West African folk melodies are usually simple, short, repetitive, and, mostly, modal. In 'Omo Oba Sokoto', the first melody appears in bars 5 to 8 where it is vocalised by the bass. The tenor voice then takes up a different melodic line from bars 9 to bar 12, the

alto voice part from bars 13-16, and the soprano voice part from bars 17 -20. The melody is characterised by stepwise motion between the intervals of a fifth, sixth, and octave.

The melodic contour moves upward and downward while the rhythm also alternates between long and short notes (semiquavers tied to quavers). A somewhat static but rising melody is described by the rising interval of pitch, which appears in a B flat tonality (bars 4 to 8). As the folk song on which the composition is based, the dominant thematic

material of the piece is based on the diatonic scale. The melody is given to the soprano

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble and piano. The vocal parts are Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The piano part is shown below. The score is in 4/4 time and F major. A red box highlights bars 21 to 30, where all four voices sing in unison. The lyrics 'o mo o ba so ko to' are written below the vocal staves. The piano accompaniment is shown below the vocal staves.

bars 21 and extemporises to bar 36.

Bars 21 to 30, melody excerpts from (*o-mo-o-ba-so-ko-to*)

Generally, Oguntade's treatment of melody in the variations is as follows:

Bars 37 to 41, (*o-mo-o-ba-so-ko-to*)

- In variation one (bars 4 to 8), all four parts are given independent melodies. However, the main musical idea that comprises a fragment of the folk song (the subtheme) is retained and shared at various times within this section. The bass voice starts the dominant musical idea from bars 4 to 8 with other voices forming (S.A.T.B.).
- In variation two (20 to 36), Oguntade employs a unison entry for each voice and shifts the mode to a homophonic texture
- Variation three (bars 37 to 39) features canonic singing. The alto voice part sustains the last note for the soprano, and this continues for the other parts, while the different entries of voices harmonies each other to the end.

The various voice entries create some tension, color, and variety in this section while it overlaps and continues until bar 37 which harmonically explores the altered chord F-G-D-E resolving to F-C-A-F in the key of F major in bar (41).

The piano accompaniment is diatonically coloured with sequences affirming major modality from bars 1 to 48 with a rhythmic pattern in the piano, which is typical of the African percussive (melo-rhythmic) effects.

Harmony

The harmony used in the music is a combination of polyphonic and homophonic styles. From bar 5, a recurring motif introduces the choral entry in a homophonic texture to bar 9 which forms a polyphonic harmony. Against the homophonic texture, the unison singing and repeated notes from each voice portrayed in contrasting bars (8 -20), introduce new musical material. The new section from bars (21-33) occurs as homophonic texture with the interval of 3rd, 5th, and 7th, among others, while displaying a stepwise ascending and descending harmony. The harmonic interval, here, shows how Oguntade combines different kinds of melodic material in writing what seems like a conventional harmony. The homophonic arrangements of section B are built on the appearance of the main folk tune from bars (21 to 36) which consists of the chorus.

Excerpts from Bar 21, (*o-mo-o-ba-so-ko-to*)

The musical score consists of five staves. The top four staves are for the vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The fifth staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: O mo o ba so ko to ki lo ti se Ha u sa.

The image displays a musical score for a choral piece. It includes four vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, along with a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in Yoruba. Red boxes highlight specific musical phrases in the vocal lines, and a yellow circle highlights a specific note in the Soprano part.

An excerpt from Bars 40 to 48, (*O-mo-O-ba-so-ko-to*)

To accommodate the repetition of the harmony from bar 37, Oguntade extends the vocal lines of the other voices by adding different musical material and moving scale-like from dominant to octave in ascending and descending order with the addition of flat and natural signs. In addition, all voices move in homophony with the piano accompaniment where the piano doubles the vocal part in accompaniment, followed by the first inversion of the dominant chord in bar 41, subdominant chord in bar 43, dominant chord in bar 45, supertonic chord (minor) in bar 46, second inversion of the tonic followed by a dominant chord and resolved to the tonic in bar 48 with an octave.

Tonality

Oguntade's choral piece analysed is written in the Yoruba language. Like many other African languages, it is tonal. In a vocal composition, ideas, and meanings are not only conveyed by words separately but also by the relationship between them. In Africa, the tonal elements in texts are major signifiers that feature in almost all kinds of music, whether it is vocal or instrumental. Talabi (2020), in Euba (2001), notes that 'If traditional music is so highly text-oriented, it is reasonable that texts are crucial to the

understanding of music in African societies. Adherence to language principles of choral music is quite difficult, even for a composer in command of such spoken language. Yoruba intonation works best in musical settings where all voice parts sing in unison or move in parallel motion. When there is independent voice leading or harmonisation of melodic lines, as is characteristic in Western music of a certain era, undesirable ambiguities could result in the text setting (Talabi, 2020). This section examines the extent to which the

26
 O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, O-ro a - na t'a jo so, O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, o-ro re o, o-ro re
 O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, O-ro a - na t'a jo so, O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, o-ro re o, o-ro re
 O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, O-ro a - na t'a jo so, O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, o-ro re o, o-ro re
 O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, O-ro a - na t'a jo so, o-re O-lo - fo - fo ti gbe lo, o-ro re o, o-ro re

tonal representation of the Yoruba language is retained in the melodic writing of Oguntade's 'Omo Oba Sokoto'. The following text from bar 29 could be misinterpreted as 'this is trouble', whereas the composer's intention, here, is to say 'o-ro-re-re-pe-te', that is 'this is surprising'.

An excerpt from Bars 29 to 30, (o-ro-re-re-pe-te')

Oguntade employs a variety of techniques in his melodic writing of this piece to retain

Soprano
 o ro re o o ro re o o ro re re pe te

the tonal inflection of Yoruba. First is his emphatic use of words, he repeats a word in a phrase, where the first appearance of the word is tonally correct (thus avoiding subsequent misunderstanding), and the second occurrence may deviate from the correct tonal setting. In this way, he creatively emphasises the word and creates a balance between meaning, and musical creativity. The notes in

bar 21, for example, would have changed the intended meaning of the word 'o-lo-fo-fo', which in context means 'the gossip', to 'a nonentity'. Second, Oguntade adopted the use of speech rhythm to preserve the tonal language in the melody. This contributes to establishing certain intended words and their meanings.

Figure: 5.35, bars 26 to 29 (o-lo-fo-fo).

Textual Translation of 'Omo oba Sokoto'

The song text of 'Omo oba Sokoto' and its translation in the English language is provided below:

Text

Oṃo, oḅa Sokoto
 Ki lò fi sè Hausa
 Oṣo, a' na t'ajoso,
 Olo fòfò ti gbe, lo,
 Oṣo, re o repete,

Translation

The prince of sokoto
 What did you do to Hausa
 Our yesterday's discussion
 has been spread by the gossip
 This is surprising!

Artistic Elements in Kayode Oguntade's Oṃo, Oḅa Sokoto

This section discusses the transformation of traditional folk melodies into Western musical formats, particularly within the realm of choral music, and the artistic intentions of Kayode Oguntade such as:

1. **Cross-Cultural Musical Adaptation:** Scholars have long explored the process of adapting traditional melodies into different musical styles. Turino (2008) discusses the concept of "collaborative ethnomusicology," emphasizing the importance of cultural engagement and collaboration when adapting traditional music into new contexts. This collaborative approach acknowledges the cultural significance of the source material while embracing the creative possibilities of cross-cultural transformation.
2. **Cultural Synthesis in Choral Music:** The synthesis of cultural elements in choral music has garnered attention, shedding light on the potential for the harmonious coexistence of distinct musical heritages. In his work, Agawu (2003) discusses how choral music can serve as a medium for cultural dialogue and exploration, providing a platform for the interaction of diverse musical traditions.
3. **Artistic Intentions and Cultural Preservation:** The motivations of composers in adapting traditional music into Western formats are multifaceted. Nketia (1974) emphasizes the role of composers as cultural mediators, responsible for preserving the essence of traditional music while presenting it in contemporary musical languages. Such intentions reveal a delicate balance between honoring cultural heritage and embracing artistic innovation.
4. **Cultural Authenticity and Representation:** The concept of authenticity in cross-cultural musical adaptations remains a topic of discourse. Stokes (1994) addresses the challenges of representing non-Western traditions in Western compositions, raising questions about the potential for misrepresentation and exoticism. This prompts a consideration of ethical and cultural implications when adapting traditional music.
5. **Reception and Impact:** The reception of cross-cultural musical adaptations, including choral arrangements of traditional melodies, offers insights into the broader implications of such creative endeavors. Lawrence and Post (2012) discuss how audience perceptions and reactions reflect evolving attitudes toward cross-cultural engagement and musical diversity.
6. **Educational Significance:** Scholars have recognized the educational value of cross-cultural musical adaptations in academic settings. Reimer (2003) discusses how such arrangements provide students with opportunities to explore the intersections of different musical cultures, fostering cultural appreciation and understanding.
7. **Contextualizing Oguntade's Arrangement:** While the literature covers a wide range of cross-cultural adaptations, specific analyses of Kayode Ogunbade's arrangement of "Oṃo, Oḅa Sokoto" remain limited. This study contributes to the scholarly discourse by

focusing on the transformative journey of this traditional folk melody into a Western choral arrangement, delving into Ogunbade's creative choices, artistic intentions, and the broader cultural implications of his adaptation

Conclusion

This study offers a detailed analysis of Kayode Ogunbade's arrangement of the traditional folk melody "Omo Oba Sokoto," shedding light on the intricate process of adapting a traditional African melody into a Western choral context. Through this analysis, the study contributes insights into the specific musical techniques, harmonizations, and rhythmic choices that facilitate cross-cultural transformation. It enriches the scholarly landscape by offering a detailed case study that navigates the complexities of cross-cultural musical adaptation within the realm of choral music, providing a nuanced perspective on the creative interplay between traditional folk narratives and Western musical idioms.

The journey from the traditional folk tale "Omo Oba Sokoto" to its Western choral rendition by Kayode Ogunbade embodies the transformative power of music to transcend cultural confines and forge connections between seemingly disparate musical traditions. The fusion of these musical realms exemplifies the potential for harmony and cross-cultural dialogue, underscored by shared melodies and the resonance of artistic expression. Through the analysis of Ogunbade's arrangement, we have unveiled the delicate balance of preserving the cultural essence of the source material while improving the expressive possibilities of the African choral idiom. This investigation has illuminated the strategies, techniques, and artistic choices that enable the harmonious coexistence of traditional narratives within modern musical frameworks. This supports Onyeji's (2005) claim that contemporary Nigerian composers must create research-based compositions to strengthen a strong Nigerian identity in their works. *Omo Oba Sokoto's* choral arrangement, which resonates vividly with the musical elements of both Africa and the West, is a prime example of the fusion of these two musical genres.

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