

**EZEGBE'S PHILOSOPHY ON ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN VOCAL
MUSIC COMPOSITION, USING ONWUEKWE'S *JEHOVAH BU
ONYE NA-AZUM DIKA ATURU* AS MUSICAL EXAMPLE**

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Abstract

The philosophical nature of musical arts in Africa is evidenced in the musical resources that abound in every nook and cranny of the continent. Each country, town or village has a lot to offer in terms of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic structures, which are guided by the tonal inflection of the words which is a striking characteristic of African melodies. Ezegbe (1983) developed a model for analysis of African melodies. He gave eight criteria under which African melodies can be analyzed. These include: The scale mode, the tonal range, the melody, the rhythm, the texture, the frequency of tone occurrence, melodic contour typology and percentage density. Onwuekwe's (2007) *Jehovah bu Onye na-azum Dika Aturu* has been analyzed based on the above criteria.

Introduction

A Biography of the late Reverend Canon Dr. Clement Chukwuemeka Ezegbe (1939-2003)

According to his Funeral Brochure of 7th November, 2003, late Reverend Canon Dr. Clement Chukwuemeka Ezegbe was born on the 12th of October, 1939 at Achina, in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State, where his parents were serving at the time. By virtue of his Christian background, as his parents belonged to the early

generation of Christian converts, the young Clement grew up in the tenets of that tradition, from which he never departed, nor did he toy with. Indeed, the entire life of Late Revd. Canon Dr. Clement Ezegbe, bore an eloquent testimony of a deep-rooted principled strive towards perfection in Jesus Christ.

He started his primary education at St. Peter's Central School, Amawbia and St. John's Primary School, Nise between 1948 and 1955. It is on record that he graduated from the primary school with distinction in 1955. He had no doubts in his mind even at that stage what he wanted to make out of his life. He was so moved by the zeal to become God's own fisherman that he enrolled in a 4-year teacher training programme at Bishop Lasbery College, Irete- Owerri in 1959 and obtained the Nigerian Teachers' Grade II Certificate (TC II) with merit from Irete in 1962, having been declared the best student of that year in the College. At Irete, under the late Mr. Daniel C. Erinne as the Principal, Clement belonged to the first set of the brilliant students admitted for the 4-year programme. It was at this college that he developed his talent in music and he really had formal education in music there. At the College, he participated keenly in various sporting activities and represented the college in the then Amateur Athletics Association of Nigeria competitions, both at regional and national levels. He also represented the college in the inter-colleges competitions among all the Teacher Training Colleges in the then Eastern Nigeria.

After leaving Bishop Lasbery College, he was appointed a tutor at St. Paul's Teacher Training College, Awka, where he taught Physical and Health Education, Music and Mathematics from 1963-1966. While there Clement was also giving a helping hand at the St. Mary's Church, Nri, where he was elected unanimously the leader of the Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF) as well as its Choir Master. Shortly after, he single handedly founded the 'Boys' Brigade.' He was also the Co-coordinator and Sunday-School teacher, and he quite often helped the Catechist in-charge of the Church with the reading of the lessons

during service and sometimes even at the sermon. As the leader of AYF, he ensured that the Church compound wore a clean and pleasant look, adorned with the most exquisite flowers, with fragrant smell.

Clement also added a new tonic to evangelism, reaching out to all the nooks and crannies of Nri community and environs. He used Boys' Brigade activities, especially in the band to pull youngsters to the Church. As the Choir Master cum organist, he ensured that Church services were made interesting, solemn and animated, so much so that members found it difficult to miss Church services on Sundays. Consequently, the Church was always filled to the brim, which informed the recent effort to erect a much enlarged Church, akin to 'Cathedral in the bush'. In a nutshell, the young and amiable Clement had a magic wand for drawing the committed as well as the not-so-committed members alike to the Church - his impeccable character, the beauty of the environment, the captivating music by his choir backed up by his melodious musical organ, the band and the acrobatic demonstrations by the boys' brigade.

From St Paul's, he went to the University of Nigeria Nsukka during the 1966/67 session for a Diploma programme in Music Education. Within the same year, he wrote and passed the GCE Advanced level in two subjects. The Nigerian civil war, which broke out in 1967 led to the shutting down of schools including the Universities. This changed Clement's life like it did to the lives of many born within the period. In his case there were positive changes as he plunged himself into more humanitarian work, serving as leader and commandant in the Biafran Red Cross. He was in the Red Cross Detachment Nri war front from 1967 to January 1970.

When the war ended in 1970, Reverend Ezegbe went back to the University of Nigeria Nsukka to pursue a degree programme in Music Education. He obtained his Bachelor's Degree and was posted to Girls' Secondary School Ozubulu in 1973 as Master Grade I, while he applied for and was granted an open scholarship. His handling of the issues surrounding that scholarship award earned him a high commendation for honesty from the Federal Ministry of Education Lagos in 1972. He joined the Federal Ministry of Education as Education Officer II and was posted to Federal Government College Kano, where he worked from December 1973 to 1974.

He returned to the University of Nigeria Nsukka his alma mater as a Junior Fellow from 1974 to 1975. Within the same year, he got the University of Nigeria Nsukka Fellowship award which he enjoyed until 1978. In 1974, he married Miss Gwamniru Oraeki. That union was blessed with three children - Blessing, Peace and Clement Junior.

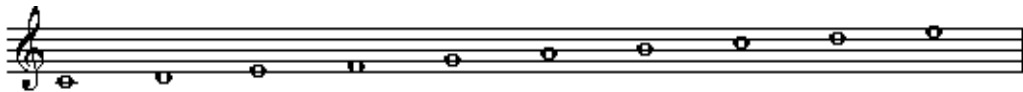
He left the shores of Nigeria in pursuit of higher education at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC, Canada. There, he pursued a Master's Degree programme in Music to its conclusive end in 1977. He immediately went over to the Vancouver School of Theology (affiliated to the University) where he did his Master's Degree programme for a Postgraduate studies in Theological Education. He finally obtained his Doctor of Education degree (Ed. D) in Educational Administration and Integrated Music/Social Studies Curriculum, a degree he obtained from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver Canada in 1981.

Clement returned to Nigeria and took up appointment as a Principal Lecturer in the Anambra State College of Education Awka in the Department of music where he worked as lecturer and from 1983 to 1990. In 1990, he was appointed a Senior Lecturer in Educational Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. where he worked until his death in 2003.

Ezegbe's Philosophy on Analysis of African Vocal Music Composition

Ezegbe (1983) gave us eight criteria for analysis of African vocal music composition which include: The scale mode, the tonal range, the melody, the rhythm, the texture, the frequency of tone occurrence, melodic contour typology and percentage density. Onwuekwe's *Jehovah bu Onye na- azum dika aturu* (The Lord is my Shepherd) is taken from Psalm 23 of *Ekpere na Abu* (Igbo version of the Bible). The analysis of the music is based on the above named criteria.

1. The Scale Mode: Diatonic



The scale mode of Onwuekwe's (2007) *Jehovah bu Onye na-azum dika aturu* is diatonic, which according to Randel (2001: 226) is "a scale with seven different pitches (heptatonic) that are adjacent to one another on the circle of fifths."

The Structure of the Scale Mode: *Jehovah bu Onye na- azum dika aturu* (The Lord is my Shepherd) has a non-equidistant scale mode because the intervals between tones are not equal. The intervals are made up of whole tones and semitones as evidenced in the melody in the opening bars of the music as shown below:

JEHOVAH BU ONYE NA-AZUM DIKA ATURU

Composer: Agatha Onwuckwe

The musical score is written in 6/8 time and consists of three staves. The Soprano staff begins with the lyrics "Je-ho-va bu O-nye n'a-zum-- di-ka a-tu-ru-- o di-ghi-". The Soprano (S) staff starts at measure 5 with the lyrics "he ko-rom Je-ho-vah bu o-nye na-zu m di-ka a-tu-ru". The Alto (A) staff also starts at measure 5 with the lyrics "Je-ho-vah bu o-nye na-zu m di-ka a-tu-ru". The melody is primarily composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

- 2. Tonal Range:** The range of the melody is from one-line C to two-line E, with intervallic range of a compound third as shown above on the scale mode. The music is pitched in key C major.
- 3. The Melody (I) Intervallic Relationship:** In the piece of music, there are intervals of seconds as can be seen in bars 5, 6, 7 and 8 above. Interval of a minor second can be seen in bar 7 of the above music example where the note one-line F moves by conjunct motion down to one-line E. An interval of a major second is seen in bar 5 from one-line G to one-line A. These intervals of major and minor seconds are also repeated in many bars of the piece of music.

- (ii) **Movement:** There are both disjunct and conjunct movements in the piece of music. In other words, there are both leaps and stepwise movements.
 - (iii) **Repeated Notes:** Some notes in the piece of music are repeated, in other words, they are static. The repeated notes are one-line E, one-line G and one-line A as shown in bars 2, 1 and 3 respectively. In other bars of the music, static notes are also used.
4. **Rhythm:** The music has a regular rhythm with a time signature of six quaver beats in a bar (6/8). The characteristic rhythmic modes are:



5. **Texture:** *Jehovah bu Onye na-azu m di ka aturu* is homophonic in texture since it is composed for Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. From bar 21 to bar 40 of the music, there is a call and refrain section between the soprano and the other parts, while all the parts come in from bar 38 to 40, bringing that section to a conclusive end. Below are the musical examples to that effect.

Ezeabe's Philosophy on Analysis of African Vocal...

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S N'e - b'i - tan - ri, n'e - b'i - tan - ri,

A n - ke n - du n - ke n - du

T n - ke n - du n - ke n - du

B n - ke n - du n - ke n - du

25

S N'e - b'i - tan - ri, n - ke a - hi - hian - du, ka O - n'e - me

A ka O - n'e - me

T ka O - n'e - me

B ka O - n'e - me

29

S ka m ma - kpu. N'a - ku - ku m - mi - ri,

A ka m ma - kpu. n - ke n - du

T ka m ma - kpu. n - ke n - du

B ka m ma - kpu. n - ke n - du

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S N'a - ku - ku m - mi - ri, n'a - ku - ku m - mi - ri n - ke i - zu i -

A n - ke n - du

T n - ke n - du

B n - ke n - du

34

S ke ka O n'e - du mu nwa - yo.

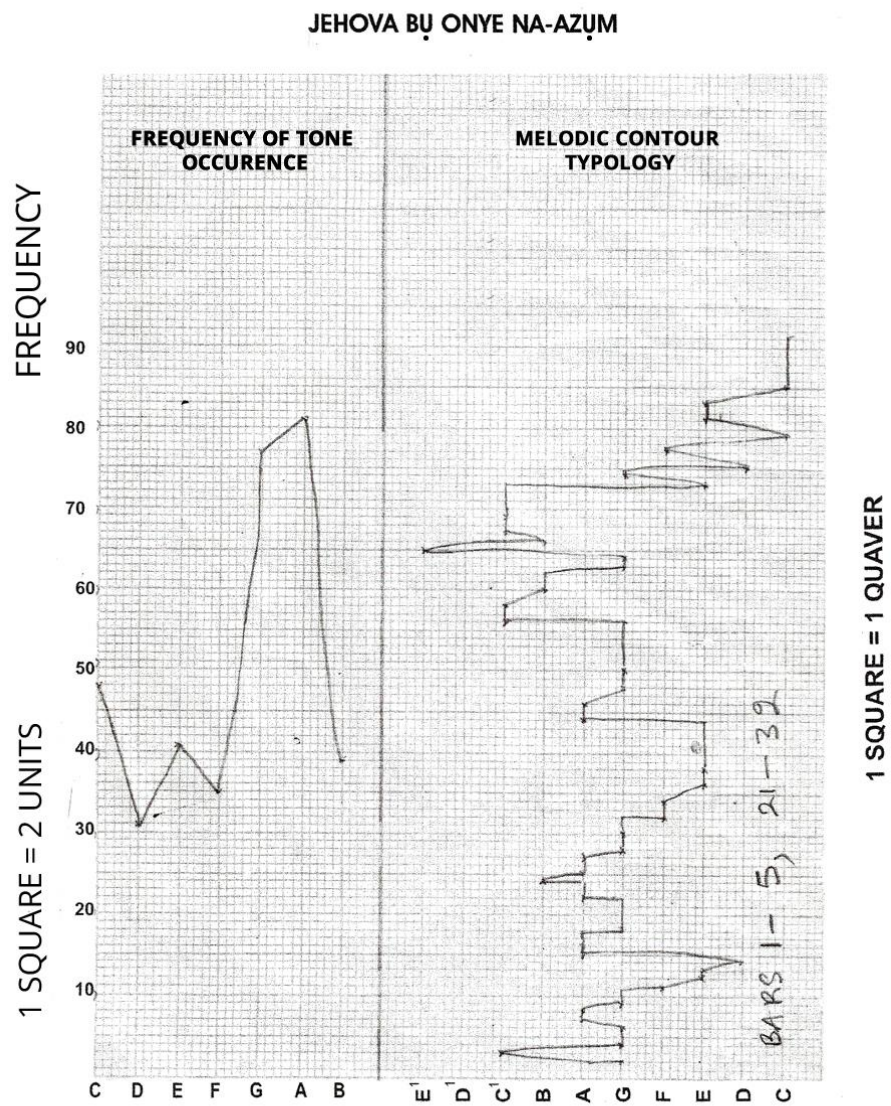
A ka O - n'e - du mu nwa - yo.

T ka O n'e - du mu nwa - yo.

B ka O n'e - du mu nwa - yo.

6. Frequency of tone Occurrence for *Jehovah bu Onye na- azum Dika Aturu.*

The frequency of tone occurrence for *Jehovah bu Onye na-azum dika aturu* is seen on the frequency graph below.



Key to the Graph: Frequency of Tone Occurrence

On the vertical axis, 1 square represents 1 unit. On the horizontal axis, 5 squares represent 1 unit or one tone. The graph of frequency shows that the predomination musical note used in the composition is A, which is 81 in number. This is followed by G, which is 77 in number. Then comes C, which is 48 in number. The next in magnitude is E, 41. Others are B; 39, F; 35 and finally D; 31.

The difference between the highest and the lowest number of notes used in the composition is $81 - 31 = 50$. There are altogether 352 musical notes used in the melody of the composition.

7. Melodic Contour Typology:

The melodic contour typology graph for *Jehovah bu Onye na-azim di ka aturu* is seen in the graph on the previous page.

Key to the Graph: Melodic Contour

On the vertical axis, 5 squares represent 1 tone. On the horizontal axis, 1 square represents 1 quaver note. Musical notes of varied note values like crotchets, quavers, dotted crotchets, dotted minims and quavers are used in the music. Static notes are also used and these are represented in the melodic contour graph.

The music moves in both conjunct and disjunct motions as intervals of seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths are seen scattered throughout the piece of music. All these give the graph a characteristic appearance.

8a. The Density:

The density is the number of times each musical note appears in the melody.

The density of each musical note used for the composition is as follows:

C	=	48
D	=	31
E	=	41
F	=	35
G	=	77
A	=	81
B	=	39
Total Density	=	352

8b. The Percentage Density:

The percentage density is the percentage of each musical note in relation to the total number of notes used in the composition.

The percentage density of each musical note or tone is as follows:

C	=	$\frac{48}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	13.64%
D	=	$\frac{31}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	8.81%
E	=	$\frac{41}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	11.65%
F	=	$\frac{35}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	9.94%
G	=	$\frac{77}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	21.88%
A	=	$\frac{81}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	23.01%
B	=	$\frac{39}{352}$	x	$\frac{100}{1}$	=	11.07%

Total Percentage Density = 100%

Summary and Conclusion:

The eight criteria for analysis of African vocal music composition have been discussed. These criteria, which include the scale mode, the tonal range, the melody, the rhythm, the texture, the frequency of tone occurrence, melodic contour typology and percentage density are straight forward and easy to understand. The scale mode is diatonic since the melody makes use of all the tones in an octave. It has a non-equidistant scale mode because the intervals between tones are not equal. The tonal range of the melody is from one-line C to two-line E, with an intervallic range of a compound third. It should be noted that the analysis is based on the melody, which employs intervals of major and minor seconds and thirds, perfect fourths and fifths, major sixths and sevenths and perfect octaves.

There are both conjunct and disjunct movements in the piece of music. The music has a regular rhythm with a time signature of six quaver beats in a bar. The characteristic rhythmic modes were also given. The music has a homophonic texture since it is composed for Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass. The frequency of tone occurrence reveals the frequency of each note used in the melody and this is graphically represented. The melodic contour typology which is also graphically represented shows the actual movement of the melody in terms of the rising and falling tones. The percentage density reveals the percentage of each note in relation to all the musical notes used in the melody. In conclusion, the criteria for analysis of African vocal music composition by Ezegebe are valuable musical heritage which can be applied for analysis of the melody in African vocal music composition. It can be used for analysis of African vocal music by composers, students, ethnomusicologists, music teachers and in fact musicologists in general.

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