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Decolonizing and Enriching Opera: A Nigerian Folktale One Act Opera

Miracle Ogbor Amah

A Doctor of Musical Arts Document submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

School of Music

May 2022

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Dedications

This project is first dedicated to God, who helped me through all the sleepless nights of writing and blessed me with wonderful people who supported me through the process. I would like to also dedicate this to my loving mother who always encouraged me and prayed for grace and strength for me. Lastly, I dedicate this to my husband, who always allowed me the time to write and held me responsible for getting the work done. Thank you for always being there to calm me down when I needed it and take me away from my computer screen at the right time.

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Abstract

Aligned with the decolonial aims of this project, this English and Yoruba language opera promotes an international understanding of African operatic styles which reflect literary, musical, instrumental and dance cultural traditions. This paper addresses some of the issues faced by people of color in the opera world, ways that people of color have been resilient in this genre and ways to enrich the opera world with the aim of decolonizing and deframing the white racial structure. This opera was first performed on March 29th, 2022 and was created as a workshop for performances in high schools, colleges, music institutions, and opera houses in America and around the world.

For centuries opera has stayed very close to its origins, deeply rooted as a White European artform. Yet, opera expressions exist all over the world. This opera incorporates the Yoruba language of Nigeria in a modern version of a classic Nigerian folktale resulting in composer Dr. Ayo Oluranti's *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin* (The Farmer's Daughter Becomes a Musician). This presentation of this Nigerian opera based on the initial of "The Farmer's Son Becomes a Hunter" which was re-written to be "the Farmer's Daughter Becomes a Musician." There are seven unique elements: the Yoruba language, Yoruba festivals (the setting for the opera), the intricacy of Yoruba proverbs, the *oríkì* (praise poetry), dance traditions, other non-western genres of music like the highlife and Afrobeat music and the African percussion instruments. This intentional and masterful expansion of the White European protocols is a decolonizing practice that enriches the artform.

Chapter 1

Clear Need to Decolonize Opera

For centuries, opera has stayed very close to its origin, deeply rooted as a White European artform. Yet, operatic expressions exist all over the world. As a black African woman, I am often asked about my vocation as an opera singer. People both new and familiar often respond with disbelief or even derision, saying things like: “So you sing White people music?” “But you are black, that is a White man's world, how do you survive?”, “Do you get hired at all?”, “Why are you singing White people’s music when you could focus on popular and jazz music? I’m sure it pays better,” or simply “I don’t know what that is.” Unfortunately, these responses capture the simple fact that opera has not meaningfully evolved or expanded beyond the White European frame for centuries. The repertoire performed in the major opera houses around the world continues to highlight the canonized White European paradigm.

By privileging the White and European canon, opera is a site of colonialism. According to Maldonado-Torres' 2007 article,¹ “Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration”. In this case, opera is the artform with long-standing patterns of Europeanism. This project is a decolonial effort to introduce Yoruba language into a traditionally European artform.

¹ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 240-270, accessed on February 10, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>.

In 2021, public and heinous acts of bigotry towards and loss of Black and Asian lives incited the rise of the “Black Lives Matter” and “Stop Asian Hate” movements. More White Americans than ever are now paying attention to racism in a way that has found its way into the opera world. The driving questions for those who believe this reckoning has been coming a long time are: How long will this push for diversity last before reverting to traditional European canons? How far-reaching will change toward equity go before these movements wear out and we return to the previous status quo of discrimination? What are we, as musicians and scholars in opera, doing to set the seal for more diversity, equity, and inclusion?

According to Phillip Ewell’s article “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame”:

The reason that the numbers of BIPOC do not go up is not because we in music theory do not do a good job of explaining what we do to others. The reason why there are so few BIPOC in music theory is because of music theory’s unwillingness to acknowledge our White racial frame, which consists of various racialized structures that benefit Whites and Whiteness over non-Whites and non-Whiteness. If we were to take anti racist action, institutional and structural, I believe we would see the number of BIPOC rise quite naturally and organically in our field”.²

Taking Ewell’s point a step further, the same can be said about opera. In her interview,³ Dr. Tiffany Jackson summarizes, “It comes to a conversation about how these opera companies would survive without standard repertoire.” The Metropolitan Opera House was founded in April 1880, yet it was not until 2021 that they performed an opera composed by a Black composer. After 141 years of presenting European and white-composed operas, on the 27th of September, Terrence Blanchard’s three act opera *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* was performed at the MET (Metropolitan Opera House in New York City).

² Philip Ewell, “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame,” *Music Theory Online* 26, no. 2 (September 2020), accessed January 20, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.30535/mto.26.2.4>.

³ Jackson, Tiffany. 2021. Interview by Miracle Ogbor. Zoom. July 25, 2021.

This illustrates an attempt for opera to address its white racial frame and make room for more compositions like Blanchard's.

This project is not about being unduly critical, offensive, or confrontational towards opera culture; It is about finding an entry into the canon for artists who enrich the artform by building on the original white European foundation and creating awareness about the spread of opera. Decolonizing and enriching the opera world does not mean that European operas should no longer be performed, but that it is time to expand our roots to more languages, nations, and continents. Now, opera houses around the world are trying to implement some such changes, but how can we make this an authentic ever-growing gamut? An example of meaningfully decolonizing and enriching opera would be to analyze, showcase, and teach more non-western works. In pursuit of this goal, this project analyzes and examines the newly composed Nigerian opera *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin* and its relevant linguistic and cultural context.

Opera's White European Roots and Global Spread

Grout and Williams's *A Short History of Opera* (2003), describes opera as “drama in music: a dramatic action, performed on stage with scenery by actors in costumes, the words conveyed entirely or for the most part by singing.”⁴ Opera originated in the early 16th century having evolved from the older traditions of medieval and renaissance courtly entertainment. The word *opera*, meaning "work" in Italian, was first used in the modern musical and theatrical sense in 1639 and soon spread to the other European countries. The

⁴ Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press: 2003): 5.

earliest operas were simplistic productions compared to other Renaissance forms of sung drama, but they soon became grand and took on the picturesque staging of the earlier genre known as *intermedio*.⁵ The opera genre continued to grow and spread across several European countries which later colonized Africa as well as other continents. However, in today's opera world, these compositions and operatic styles are underrepresented and regarded as aberrant.

Later in the 20th century, the European opera genres spread to Asian and African countries and continents. Reiko Sekine mentioned in their 2016 article called "Traces of Japanese Opera – From Tamaki Miura to Yūzuru" that "The first full-act Western opera production performed by Japanese in Japan was staged in 1903. The opera was Orpheus (*Orfeo ed Euridice*) composed by Gluck, performed at Tokyo Music School concert hall and opened to the public by invitation only." Although the Japanese indigenous opera, Kabuki⁶ started out as a dance drama during the Edo period⁷ (Between 1603 and 1867), it later evolved into opera.

In China, the late 18th century birthed the Beijing opera that was believed to have taken its roots from *Xipi* and *erhuang*. According to Nancy Guy in her 2001 Grove Online article on Beijing Opera, "It was many years, however, before the opera evolved into an independent form with its own unique identity... The early decades of the 20th century may be considered Beijing opera's golden age, with the art form being one of the most pervasive

⁵ An intermedio is a musical work performed between the acts of a play. It started in Italy from the late 15th century through the 17th century using instrumental music and sometimes singing and dancing.

⁶ A combination of all fine performance arts, music, theater, and dance, kabuki is the art of Japanese opera.

⁷ The Edo period which is also called the Tokugawa period is a period between 1603 and 1867 in the history of Japan. This was when Japan was under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate and the country's 300 regional *daimyō*. Emerging from the chaos of the Sengoku period, the Edo period was distinguished by economic growth, firm social order, isolationist foreign policies, a stable population, "no more wars", and commercial enjoyment of arts and culture."

and popular types of entertainment in China.”⁸ In the 20th century, opera spread even more in Asia. The Philippines joined the opera trend with the first Filipino opera by Pedro Paterno performed at the Zorrilla Theatre on August 2nd, 1902.

In African countries like Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Ghana, opera has evolved from indigenous dance dramas of the late 20th century to full blown 21st century indigenous opera compositions. The genre is still growing in the present with composers such as Ayo Oluranti, Laz Ekwueme, Sibusiso Njeza, Gabriel Ekum, Bode Omojola, Pierre Audiger, and Sibisi. In Nigeria, opera evolved as both folk opera and the classical folk opera. This will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. Thus, this global history shows that opera has a more diverse representation across the world than is often portrayed by scholars, schools, performers and the opera industry in general.

Opera and Racial Discrimination

During the past decades, classical music has tried to diversify with respect to race, yet the genre today remains predominantly White and European,⁹ not only in terms of the people who perform it, but also in the ethnic origins of the composers, theorists, and historians. It is only recently that racism in opera is being more openly discussed despite being in existence for ages. As Andre et al. wrote in their book *Blackness in Opera*:

Consider, for example, the simple act of “blacking up,” the stage practice of applying dark makeup—often, though not exclusively, by white performers— in order to “pass” as a black or dark-skinned character (as often seen with the title characters in *Otello* or *Aida*, though several other operatic characters have traditionally received

⁸ Nancy Guy, "Beijing opera," *Grove Music Online*, Accessed January 12, 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051764>.

⁹ *White Europeans* covers opera works in Italian, French, German, and English

similar treatment). The opera stage is perhaps the only space in American culture today where such overt racial imitation is routinely performed without comment or query.¹⁰

As a blog post for Black Central Europe explains, another example of problematic depictions of blackness in opera is the role of Monostatos in Mozart's *Magic Flute*:

Described as a Moor, the character of Monostatos in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute* (1791) represents an amalgam of racist stereotypes surrounding Blackness in the late eighteenth century. Being Black, Monostatos, the overseer of Sarastro's temple, is not to be trusted and has dark and evil tendencies. He appears in most productions as grotesque, dirty, and buffoon-like, incapable of being truly loved by another.¹¹

Opera is an art form that was constructed in the depths of class privilege. For most of its history, it was supported by monarchs, aristocrats, and wealthy patrons. Haydn was financed by the prince; Mozart and Beethoven were supported by a baron; Wagner backed up by the king; Stravinsky and Copland endowed by the heiress.¹² Today, the genre is still clenched on a historical lack of diversity. The historical and economical discrimination has birthed countless diversity problems including Paradigms of Classism,¹³ Primitivism,¹⁴

¹⁰ Naomi Andre, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, eds., *Blackness in Opera*. (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 26. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹ "The Character, Monostatos, in Mozart's Opera, *The Magic Flute* (1791)," *Black Central Europe*, May 1, 2020, <https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1750-1850/the-character-monostatos-in-mozarts-opera-the-magic-flute-1791/>.

¹² Robert Jackson Wood, "The Stubborn Classism of Classical Music," *The New Republic*, December 10, 2020, <https://newrepublic.com/article/160469/insidious-classism-classical-music>.

¹³ Discrimination against or in favor of people within a specific class

¹⁴ Elliot Jones, "Music 101: Primitivism", Lumen Learning Open Educational Resources (OER) Services, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-musicapp-medieval-modern/chapter/primitivism/>.

As was the case with so many other trends in the early twentieth century, primitivism originated in the visual arts. Painters such as Paul Gauguin and Pablo Picasso felt disillusioned with Western art traditions and turned to indigenous cultures, untrained painters, and children's art for inspiration. They portrayed their topics from unconventional vantage points. When composers attempted to convey a similar feeling of non-Western viewpoint via music, they often stressed the musical element of rhythm in order to convey an old or primitive mindset.

Orientalism,¹⁵ and Exoticism¹⁶. These paradigms have been used as an attempt to understand a foreign or different culture but are stuck behind a white European lens and do not allow for the inclusivity of the full depth of other cultures. According to Ralph Locke's Grove

Online article on Orientalism:

These and other such (real or supposed) musical features of the 'Middle East' were then exploited by other composers, such as Bizet (*Les pêcheurs de perles*), Verdi (*Aida*), Massenet (*Thaïs*), and Richard Strauss (*Salome*). A heavily imaginary version of the 'Middle East' also became a favored setting for ballets (*La source*, with music by Delibes and Minkus) and modern-dance works (e.g., by Ruth St Denis). Many successful works were likewise set in East Asia, notably Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*.¹⁷

Unfortunately, these paradigms have been embraced and canonized in opera. In recent years, music researchers have authored articles, blogs and book chapters that have stirred up dialogues about White predominance in different facets of classical music. One major example is the 2019 article "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame" by Philip Ewell.¹⁸ This article addresses issues of racism in music theory. For the past centuries, opera has been a major form of art that is being performed throughout the globe. However, this art form has been canonized as White European music for its entire existence. Though opera is being performed all over the world, it has stayed in the White European siloes of Italian, French, German and English. The widespread use of this art form in several parts of the

¹⁵ Ralph Locke, "Orientalism," *Grove Music Online*, (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40604>

Orientalism is a term that refers to musical Exoticism within Western art music that evokes the East or the Orient; more broadly, it refers to the attitude toward those same geo-cultural regions expressed in certain Western musical works, regardless of whether the work itself evokes the region's music.

¹⁶ Alice Eunmi Lee, "Musical Exoticism Explored in Piano Works from the Eighteenth Century Through the Early Twentieth Century." abstract (DMA diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2008), <https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/12934>.

"Exoticism is the evocation of a culture different from that of the composer. It occurs anytime a composer tries to conjure up the music of a country not his own."

¹⁷ Locke, "Orientalism."

¹⁸ Philip A. Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame." 2020, *Music Theory Online* 26 (2). <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.20.26.2/mto.20.26.2.ewell.html>.

world has spurred composers to write operas in their native dialects showcasing their diverse narrative and dramatic elements and cultures. Unfortunately, because this art form has historically been expressed from the narrow lens of White Europeanism, the works of these innovative composers have been neglected and underrepresented in classical music. It would be safe to say that most operas, despite any racial bias presented in them, are written for a specific culture in which they are performed. If the culture is not diverse, then opera, in a sense, has been trapped inside the limitations of the culture it serves. This document is a contribution to shattering the narrow lens of White Europeanism in opera today and to unveiling the latent view of a decolonized and independent opera world that is enriched with diversity, equity and inclusion.

Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once said, “Music is the universal language of all mankind.”¹⁹ Though opera originated from the White European continent centuries ago, its continued growth should showcase a more universal spectrum. If opera is still referred to as “White people music,” then we as opera singers, conductors, composers and listeners still have a long way to go in the decolonization and deframing of the White racial structure in opera. Martin Luther King, Jr. urged, “This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.”²⁰

¹⁹ Jed Gottlieb Harvard. 2019. “New Harvard Study Says Music Is Universal Language.” *Harvard Gazette* (blog). November 21, 2019. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/11/new-harvard-study-establishes-music-is-universal/>.

²⁰ Dr. Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream”, Accessed January 8, 2022. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/speech/dream.htm#:~:text=This%20is%20no%20time%20to,sunlit%20path%20of%20racial%20justice.>

Experiences and Perspectives of BIPOC Individuals in Opera

Gustavo Molinar's 2020 article titled "(Re)Defining Resilience: A Perspective of "Toughness" in BIPOC Communities"²¹ says:

For Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), generations of trauma, systemic racism, and cultural barriers lead to resilience looking very different than what we have taken it to mean in our society. This is not to say that we should discard resilience. In fact, I would say we should pay more attention to it. While resilience can be developed, we should consider how some have no choice but to be resilient. For BIPOC such as myself, being resilient is an act of resistance and survival, while we also celebrate the joys across and within each community.

To further buttress Molinar's point of view, BIPOC in opera have continued to be resilient despite being faced with systemic racism, cultural barriers, underrepresentation and constant apprehension. Illustrating the lived experiences of BIPOC individuals in opera with a significant sample of interviews is beyond the scope of this document, and further national and international research will be required to build wide-spread antiracism and decolonization efforts. However, this section will share the experiences of Dr. Tiffany Jackson, a black woman in opera, Takayuki Komagata, a young Japanese professional in opera, and my own experience in the Western opera world. (See Appendix D to read full interviews and their biographical information.)

Though Mozart's opera buffa brought a notable change in the paradigm of classism compared to opera seria, we still see classism and cultural criticism today in opera. People with a spoken accent, many of whom are immigrants, foreign born or from multicultural families and BIPOC are constantly denied roles because of their skin color or accent. The

²¹ Gustavo Molinar, "(Re) Defining Resilience: A Perspective of 'Toughness' in BIPOC Communities." Mental Health America. Accessed January 8, 2022. <https://mhanational.org/blog/re-defining-resilience-perspective-toughness-bipoc-communities>.

history of opera has portrayed and painted non-European, non-White races as less desirable, and less intelligible. As Dr. Jackson expressed:

I debuted the role of “The Mother” in *Little Women* by the new composer at that time named Mark Adamo and it was very successful. But when it became successful, I no longer played “The Mother.” They found a White woman to play “The Mother” because it was more believable for the four White girls who were sisters in this opera. I do remember thinking to myself, like, wow! I was fine when I brought this role to life but now that it’s thriving, I no longer need to be a part of it. They never said that to me, but it was easy to see.²²

According to Dr. Tiffany Jackson, one of the hurdles she has had to go through is growing up black and not being used to European languages. She says:

I grew up in the hood around Black people, Puerto Ricans, Jamaicans, Dominicans. I grew up in a very diverse neighborhood in New Haven, Connecticut. So, I had to, in some ways, learn to become a part of the opera establishment and that was a major hoop at the time; I didn’t know what I was doing. I grew up in the ghetto, so I had to learn to be a bit more mild and assimilate and learn these languages and how to speak them figuratively and literally. That was something that was not so eventful for me.²³

Komagata also mentions that he constantly felt inferior because of his accent and was uncomfortable being in some productions. He says:

It is such a White and elitist society in the opera world. I have always felt weird being Japanese and singing opera. Maybe not a lot of discrimination because there are other Asians in the field too but definitely odd. I always felt like I was second class. People told me “You aren’t European; you can’t really sing this.” In a lot of productions, I have been the only Asian and even the only colored person in the room and that made me feel like I was invincible.²⁴

Racism and how it has affected BIPOC in opera is a broad and complex topic that is only now being discussed. BIPOC continue to build resilience in the face of discrimination in opera. Dr. Jackson explains: “However, there is no denying the effect that racism plays.

²² Jackson, Tiffany. 2021. Interview by Miracle Ogbor. Zoom. July 25, 2021.

²³ Jackson, Tiffany. 2021. Interview by Miracle Ogbor. Zoom. July 25, 2021.

²⁴ Komagata, Takayuki. 2021. Interview by Miracle Ogbor. Zoom. September 25, 2021.

Some Black people bleach their skins and go to great lengths to avoid the stigma of being Black or Brown. Some people go so far that they simply wish to disassociate and avoid the stigma.... I made the decision to build my life and profession around my destiny and what God planned for me." Though resilience is a commendable trait to possess, it is difficult to cultivate when the scenario (racism) is never-ending and affects so many different aspects of people's lives.

It is a sad reality that BIPOC people in opera have faced so many challenges despite this, they continue to thrive in opera through racism, classism, orientalism, primitivism, and cultural criticism. For so many, resilience is the only option until the lengthy and difficult work of decolonizing and decentering whiteness in opera changes reality.

Ogbor's Personal Experiences and Creating Nigerian Opera in Yoruba Language

At the age of 17, I began singing classical music and opera, and it has remained a vital part of my musical journey ever since. When I began my singing career in Nigeria, I primarily sang works and pieces by European composers and occasionally performed indigenous Nigerian works. As a part of my operatic training, I worked tirelessly for years to sing songs that teachers, voice coaches, and mentors recommended as standard repertoire for my voice type. This was primarily consisting of works by White and European men standardized in opera. At first, building a huge repertoire and checking boxes in music auditions while singing the standard repertoire was exciting and fulfilling. As time passed, I saw that the repertoire remained consistent. Teachers give the same songs to all students, and students work diligently to master this standardized repertoire in preparation for auditions. Schools of music for years have made checklists that look somewhat like:

One German art song
One Italian aria
One oratorio aria from 1600-1800
One French Mélodie

As a result, students enter music programs with the preconceived notion that classical music and opera fit neatly into the checklist and cultures above. Students spend years recreating music written and performed centuries ago and from a white European racial lens, with few exceptions for new or Non-Western compositions. These students graduate from college with the same mindset and struggle to survive in the real world, where there are a thousand more voices singing similar or identical repertoire to theirs. This is the trend I have witnessed in the world of opera for years. While some individuals are lucky enough to check all of these boxes and create a successful career singing classical music, a sizable portion of the population does not. Some end up pursuing careers other than music. According to the 2021 American Lyric Theatre Opera Writers Symposiums, “BIPOC composers and librettists have written for the lyric stage for centuries, but so many of their contributions have been consciously erased from the opera house — historically white, Euro-centric, racist institutions where select, self-anointed groups of people have gone out of their way to control the repertoire, who writes opera, who is represented on stage, and how.” For years, the voices and lifelong work of these composers have been silenced and their means of income have been denied because their works are not being performed and have been abandoned.²⁵

My solution to this sad continuum was to create the libretto and perform the opera discussed in this document. After ten years of developing a repertoire that was firmly

²⁵ American Lyric Theater, “From Erased to Self-Empowered: Celebrating BIPOC Opera Composers and Librettists.” Accessed March 9, 2022. <https://www.altnyc.org/events/from-erased-to-self-empowered>.

entrenched in the European tradition, I decided in my second year as a DMA student to do a themed recital highlighting Nigerian classical music. Putting together this performance inspired self-reflection around the racial and cultural implications of only performing a historically Eurocentric canon. I solicited music from Nigerian composers for this concert. Additionally, I reached out to several composers who expressed an interest in writing a new piece for this recital and collaborating with me on the words. I realized that for so long, I had been so focused on checking these boxes that I had completely forgotten about the wonderful work that Nigerian classical composers have done and continue to accomplish in the realm of classical music.

This reality prompted several queries, such as: if opera is expanding in Nigeria, is it rising in other nations as well? For the first time in my career, I am able to connect my background to my passion as a classical singer. I wondered if there were others who lost touch with their past as a result of the pursuit of standardized classical repertoire. Are there students who have studied solely standardized classical repertoire and are now unable to establish solid musical careers that allow them to exhibit their voices' originality outside of Western canons? For generations, BIPOC individuals in opera have been denied opportunities due to racism, cultural discrimination, and prejudice. Would this opera increase chances for immigrants and people of color to perform in opera? Even though more attention is being paid now than before to racial diversity in opera, its current standard repertoire and history of racial discrimination – that impacted my experience and that of Dr. Jackson and Tomagata – does not reflect the identities and cultural traditions within opera. Analyzing this opera is my contribution to the decolonial methodology in opera.

Chapter 2

The Opera- Composer and Librettist

Ayo Oluranti

Brief Biography

Ayòdámóṗé Olúrántí (formerly Ogúnrántí) known as Ayò Olúrántí is a conductor, organist, theorist, and music scholar. He has been featured in performances and symposia in Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While his compositions have been performed around the globe, he has also given recitals on historic and famous organs in various parts of the world. In addition to his portfolio, he has efficiently designed and directed sacred music programs and was previously the Associate Organist and Composer-In-Residence at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh. He also conducted the Pittsburgh Festival Orchestra. He is a founding composer and member of Alia Musica, Pittsburgh and also a member of Bafrik, Brazil. Olúrántí graduated from the University of Southampton, UK with first-class honors (summa cum laude) in Music Composition and Organ Performance. He also holds an MA and a PhD in composition and theory from the University of Pittsburgh.

Compositional Style including Fusion of Western and Yoruba Elements

Olúrántí's compositional styles highlights five major elements: Exploring the musicality of African tonal languages, polyrhythm as an integral feature of African pianism, orality in African drums, African musical processes and resources as basis for art music composition, and intercultural music composition. Currently, Olúrántí is investigating alternative ways text sounds (high, middle and low tones in Yoruba language) can operate in composition, in place of 'conventional' musical sound. Taking the Swedish electroacoustic music as a starting point, he incorporates the tradition of the 1960s - 'text-sound' composition (as exemplified by the works of Fahlström, Bodin, Hanson, Hodell, and Laaban, among others) - as well as other similar efforts based primarily on non-tonal texts from the Indo-European language family. Because Indo-European and Niger-Congo languages differ in their phonetic inventory of sounds, the latter language family could expand the area of compositional innovation. Thus, Olúrántí's research examines the viability of the 'natural' sounds of spoken Yorùbá (Niger-Congo) and West African pidgin English (an Indo-European/Niger-Congo hybrid) texts as a compositional resource within an electroacoustic environment, and how the resulting composition can be deployed through the acoustic use of the solo/choral voice and the dùndun (Yorùbá talking drum). Olúrántí explores this concept in the opera *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín* where we see the interplay between the voice and the Yorùbá talking drum.

Approach to *Omọ Agbè Tó D'olórin*

Olúrántí explores the concept of complex and polyrhythms, orality in the African drums and the musical tonal inflection of the Yoruba language. Throughout the opera, the voice and the musical instruments employed highlight the percussive element which invokes a symbolic representation of African musical textures. Olúrántí uses the rhythmical and textural components of traditional African music with both the African traditional instruments and the Western orchestral instruments, and polyrhythm functions at various structural levels and combines them together to yield larger rhythmic consequences. Specifically, polyrhythm invoking African rhythms is a style common to the works of Olúrántí.

I developed a methodology based on a quantitative analytical technique to examine the three pieces. I coined and defined a mathematical tool, Polyrhythmic Degree (PD), with which I analyzed the quantity of polyrhythm in various polyrhythmic blocks. I generated statistical graphs with which I investigated the relationship between the formal structure of the piano pieces and the distribution of the various PD values over time, says Olúrántí.²⁶

The Polyrhythmic degree is also used in the opera as Olúrántí uses lots of polyrhythms throughout the composition. Through he uses syncopations, we find these polyrhythms hidden in the music when the percussion instruments come together with several complicated rhythm patterns but unifying in tempo to create an array of rhythms. The orality in the African drums is evident as Olúrántí uses call and response to showcase the similitude between the tonality of spoken or sung Yoruba language and the percussion instruments. We see this at the beginning of the percussion overture where the voice speaks the heightened Yoruba phrase, and the talking drum replicates the sounds and tonality as a

²⁶ Oluranti, Ayo. 2021. Interview by Miracle Ogbor. Zoom. May 25, 2021.

response. In some instances, he uses the *Akuba* drum to play the same function. The musical tonal inflection of the Yoruba language is inextricable from this opera. Due to the tonality of the Yoruba language, it is incumbent that the melodic and harmonic construct bespeaks the undulation that comes naturally with the language.

Miracle Ogbor

Brief Biography

A native of Nigeria, librettist Miracle Ogbor is a soprano presently based in the United States. She performs various genres of music which includes opera, art songs, oratorios, popular music, contemporary music, negro spirituals, jazz music, etc. Ogbor has played major roles in several opera productions. Her staged performances include scenes and full opera productions in Nigeria, Canada and the United States.

Ogbor maintains a professional singing career and also runs a private voice studio. Appended to her credentials are Master's degree in Opera and Vocal performance from the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Associate board of the royal school of music (ABRSM) Licentiate in vocal performance (LRSM); which is a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance, and two associate degrees from the Mountain top Conservatory of Music and the MUSON Diploma School of Music, Lagos, Nigeria. Ogbor has given lectures and masterclasses at colleges, institutions, schools and churches, including the Mountain top Conservatory of music where she was an assistant professor teaching vocal techniques. Ogbor has also given presentations about African music and vocal repertoire with topics that target performance practice and diversifying classical music. She has given recitals featuring Nigerian music highlighting several languages and styles.

Origin of Folktale and Synopsis

The story of "The Farmer's Son Becomes a Hunter" was the original folktale (see appendix B). As implied by the title, the farmer's son decides to become a hunter. This story was recreated to demonstrate the blending of African and Western literary characteristics. The African farmer's daughter becomes a classical singer in the altered story, "The Farmer's Daughter Becomes a Musician." Thus, the synthesis of Western and African components is demonstrated not only via the music, but also through the tale and plot.

Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin (The Farmer's Daughter Becomes a Musician) which is set to an ongoing festival held in the market square, is the narrative of Ayomide, a young and hardworking girl. While her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oluwaseyi, desires that she study agricultural science and work on their farm, Ayomide had other hopes. She works diligently and applies to a nearby institution to study music, her love. Fortunately, Ayomide receives a full scholarship to attend the institution where she would study music, but she struggles to tell this to her parents, given their previous aspirations for her education. She eventually musters the fortitude to inform her parents of the news. As a result of her reluctance to share the news, her mother believes she is pregnant and almost scolds her. Ayomide positions herself behind her father and swiftly delivers the news to avoid being reprimanded for nothing. After reading the letter, her parents were overjoyed and proud of their diligent daughter. The news becomes much more painful when they discover she chose to pursue music against their warnings. Her parents reluctantly agree to let Ayomide pursue her goal of becoming a singer.

Ayomide's story was just beginning, as she graduated from university at the top of her class, but the reality of the world was far different than her days as a mere student. While her talent was plentiful, the people of Oladuro did not have enough work for her to make a

living. The celebrations became less and less frequent, until Ayomide could barely make ends meet. Frustrated and broke, she tiredly sat on a bench in the market square, alone except for a tiny bird sitting in its cage, eyeing her with curiosity. In her despair, Ayomide hears the beautiful singing of the bird and immediately gets inspired to write a beautiful song. She had never heard such beautiful music in her entire life, and she was encouraged that all would be well. She continued her journey home with so much joy in her heart. She didn't know for sure what was going to happen next or how it was going to happen, she had a strong belief in the impending transformation of her life.

When Ayomide got home, she immediately wrote down the song she heard the bird sing and made it into a very beautiful song that everyone who heard her sing would dance and invite her to sing it again. Ayomide's father and mother had indeed never heard such beautiful music and they broke out into a dance. When Ayomide's father got his breath back, he had an idea. The king of their village had been in a depressed state for several years. The best poets, musicians, dancers and jesters had come from far away villages to cheer him up but to no avail. Maybe this song would do the trick and make their king smile. Thus, Ayomide and her father went out towards the king's domain at the festival square. When they arrived, they were halted at the gate by the guards. The guard warns them of the monarch's nasty disposition but grudgingly permits them inside the domain to amuse the king. Ayomide sings praises to the king and the rest of the village joins her in honoring the king. The king could not resist the beauty of Ayomide voice and her praises sooth his wounds. He decides that Ayomide be hired as his personal musician and the head of all the musical activities in the palace. He also offered her half of his possessions and gave her a place to stay in his quarters. And that was how the farmer and his wife, through their daughter Ayomide the musician, became rich.

Chapter 3

The Yoruba Culture and Language: its role in the opera

The Yoruba Language

Spoken in West Africa, the Yoruba language is most salient in the western part of Nigeria. It is preponderantly spoken by the Yoruba ethnic communities. The population of Yoruba speakers constitutes about fifty million first language speakers and about two million second language speakers. As a pluricentric language,²⁷ Yoruba is primarily spoken in Nigeria and Benin with smaller emigrated communities in Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. In the Afro-Brazilian communities, Yoruba lexicon are used and are known as Candomblé.²⁸ They are also used in various Afro-American religions of North America and in the form of

²⁷ “Criteria of pluricentric language:

- Occurrence: A certain language occurs in at least 2 nations that function as 'interacting centres' (Clyne, 1992: 1).
- Linguistic distance (Abstand): The variety must have enough linguistic (and/or pragmatic) characteristics that distinguish it from others and can serve as a symbol for expressing identity and social uniqueness.
- Status: The language must have an official status in at least 2 nations either as (a) state-language or (e.g., German in Austria and Germany); (b) co-state language (e.g., German, French and Italian in Switzerland) or at least as (c) regional language (e.g., German in Italy: South Tyrol, Catalan in France: Department Pyrénées-Orientales etc.). The language therefore must have official recognition that exceeds the status of a minority language as it otherwise cannot function as a norm setting centre.
- Acceptance of pluricentricity: The language community must accept the status of its language as a pluricentric variety and consider it as part of its social / national identity.
- Relevance for identity and awareness about its function for identity available: The national norm has to be relevant to social identity and must be (to some degree) aware of the language community and lead 'to at least some of its own (codified) norms.'
- Codification in progress or done and on that basis, there is deliberate use of the national norm by model speakers and state institutions.
- Taught in schools and made aware of the language community - promoted and disseminated,”

Muhr, Rudolph. 2012, Pluricentric Languages.” Accessed January 4, 2022.

<http://www.pluricentriclanguages.org/pluricentricity/what-is-a-pluricentric-language>.

²⁸ Candomblé (meaning "dance in honor of the gods") is a religion that combines elements from African cultures including the Yoruba, Bantu, and Fon, as well as some elements of Catholicism and indigenous South American beliefs.

Lisa Rudy. 2019, Explore the Brazilian Religion Candomblé.” n.d. Learn Religions. Accessed January 4, 2022.

<https://www.learnreligions.com/candomble-4692500>

liturgical Lucumi²⁹ language in the Caribbean religion of Santeria. Enthusiasts of these religions in the Americas no longer speak fluently or understand the Yoruba Language. They use short phrases of Yoruba in songs and use short sentences during rituals. Additionally, Yoruba is closely connatural to other languages like Itsekiri (spoken in the Niger Delta) and Igala (spoken in central Nigeria).

Yoruba Language Tones and Sounds

The Yoruba dialect has three tones, high (´), mid (usually left unmarked) and low (˘) and these tones oscillate at different frequencies.³⁰ The low tone is depicted with the grave accent and the high tone is depicted with the acute accent (ATLAS, 2022).³¹ These three tones are called *Obun* (voice) and are represented by the first 3 solfeggio notation signs (do, re, mi). The lowest tone which is “do” is called *obun isale* (low voice), the middle tone which is “re” is called *obun aarin* (middle voice) and the high tone which is “mi” is called *obun oke* (high voice). These signs are called *ami* (marks).

According to Adetokunbo Adekanmbi’s 1989 article “Tones of Yoruba Language,”³² “Every language has some sort of tonal characteristics that are unique to it.” He describes

²⁹ “Lucumi’ is a term here used to refer to a language spoken in Cuba by practitioners of the religion known as Santeria. hence: Lucumi is Yoruba; Lucumi and Yoruba are the same thing; Lucumi is a dialect of Yoruba; Lucumi is a mixture of Yoruba”.

David Olmsted. “Comparative Notes on Yoruba and Lucumí.” *Language* 29, no. 2 (1953): 157–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/410168>.

³⁰ Kolawole Adeniyi. 2018. “Ōun, Ohun, Ohùn: An Experimental Study of /h/ in Yoruba.” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 27 (4): 1–17. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,athens,shib&db=a9h&AN=136977122&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

³¹ ATLAS - Yorùbá: Pronunciation. Accessed January 4, 2022. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/atlas/yoruba/pronunciation.html>.

³² Arewa Ojo, and Niyi Adekola. “Redundancy Principles of Statistical Communications as Applied to Yoruba Talking-Drum.” *Anthropos* 75, no. 1/2 (1980): 185–202. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40460588>.

three different types of tones: the rhythmic tone³³, the syntactic tone³⁴, and the semantic tone. One preponderant feature of the Yoruba language is the semantic tone. According to Adekanmbi, the semantic tones are tones that create a semantic reality for words that are spelled and pronounced the same way but have different tones assigned to them that change the meaning. Adekanmbi also goes further to talk about the fourth tone in Yoruba language which is a combination of the falling (low) and rising (high) tones. He uses a tilde (~) to represent this tone. This tone highlights the malleability of the Yoruba language and how it can be maneuvered with word combinations, elisions³⁵, and liaisons.³⁶ The following are examples of words with the same spelling but different tones resulting in a different meaning.

Ogùn: with 1 middle tone and 1 low tone means “medicine”

Ògùn: with 2 low tones means “charm”

Ògùn: with 2 low tones is a state in Nigeria (same as before but changes in form of context)

Ogun: with 2 middle tones means “war”

Ògún: with 1 low tone and 1 high is the God of iron

Ogún: with 1 middle tone and 1 high tone means “twenty”

³³ Rhythmic Tones: These may also be called intonation or contour. This is the undulation of the human voice when engaged in speech.

Adekanmbi, 1989.

³⁴ Syntactic Tones: These are the tones that differentiate between the variant syntactic meanings of a sentence or types of sentences, for example, the difference between a declarative and an interrogative.

Adekanmbi, 1989.

³⁵ Elision usually occurs when two vowel sounds are pronounced: one at the end of a word and the other at the beginning of the next word. Drop the final vowel of the first word

³⁶ Liaison refers to the linking of the final consonant of one word with the beginning vowel

Liaison and Elision. Accessed January 4, 2022. <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/french/french-i/french-i-pronunciation/liaison-and-elision>

The table below shows the process of word combinations and elisions.

Table I. Word combinations and elisions

Phrase	Homogenization	Fusion	Translation
tɔrɔ owó	tɔro owó	Tɔrowó	To beg for money
Gbàgbé ɔmɔ	Gbàgbõ ɔmɔ	Gbàgbõmɔ	To forget one's child
Wo ibi	Wo obi	Wobi	To look somewhere
Béèrè ònà	Béèrò ònà	Béèrònà	To ask for directions

Festivals in the Yoruba Traditions

In the first production, due to time constraints and inability to practice stage entries and exists, the idea of the Yoruba festivals was implemented into this opera. This decision was also an artistic decision since it paved an avenue to showcase a part of the Yoruba tradition in this opera. The richness of Yoruba culture can be experienced through their festivals. This is one of the reasons why this opera is set in the scene of ongoing festivals (these festivals take place around the same time every year). In this opera, we see Ayo and her parents at the festival, and they return to the same festival square years later to perform for the king in the last scene. Sometimes, these festivals attract tourists, spectators and Nigerians living abroad. They are sometimes used to generate income by the government. Most festivals consist of performers: dancers, musicians, drummers and community members who watch from a distance or sometimes join in the dancing and singing. The participants of the festival parade from one place to another, singing and dancing. They sometimes settle in a particular place and showcase their different skills individually. In return, community members donate money, clap loudly and use hollas and calls to show excitement. Depending on how elaborate the festival is (this is decided by the community chairperson and council of elders), sometimes these festivals go on for a couple of days or weeks and could lead to the shutting down of

major roads in order to accommodate the festival's display. These festivals highlight the richness and depth of the community's history and culture. Some well-known Yoruba festivals are: The *Eyo Festival*, *Osun-Oshogbo Festival*, *Sango Festival*, *Ojude Oba Festival*, *Igogo Festival*, *Olojo Festival*, *Oro festival*, to mention a few.

Proverbs

To the Yoruba people, the use of proverbs is the most effective way to offer advice to one another. Proverbs are their distinctive way of dispensing wisdom in all their life situations. The Yoruba people are also well-known for their usage of proverbs to resolve issues like as hunger, love, hatred, and pleasure. The use of proverbs is not a phenomenon unique to one culture; rather, it is a worldwide phenomenon that tries to address societal challenges. Proverbs are so thoroughly woven into Yoruba society that nearly everyone who is fluent in Yoruba is also a natural proverbialist. In light of their cultural and moral significance, proverbs are viewed as a "conversational condiment" that enhances communication.³⁷

Table II: partial lyrics of Gbajumo

Yoruba	English translation
Gbajumo kii wa nnkan ti	A famous person does not seek and not
Gbolohun oro kan to o,	find
Lati yi ipinnu ogun odun pada	A single statement is enough
Ibi ti a nlo la nwo,	To turn-around a twenty-year-old decision
A kii wo ibi ti a ti subu	We focus on where we are going,
Ibaje eniyan,	Not where we had fallen
Ko da ise Oluwa duro	The wickedness of man
	Cannot stop the work of God

³⁷ Olanrewaju, and Felicia Titilayo. "Yoruba Proverbs as Expression of Socio- Cultural Identity in the South-Western, Nigeria." *International Journal of Language & Linguistics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2020. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.30845/ijll.v7n3p6>.

The lyrics of this aria “*Gbajumo*” which is the finale of the opera (shown in table II) are all popular Yoruba proverbs. In this aria, the character Ayomide encourages the king to stay strong. “*Gbajumo kii wa nnkan ti*” (A famous person does not seek and not find) she reminds the king of how powerful he is and that there’s nothing he wants that he cannot get. “*Gbolobun oro kan to o, lati yi ipinnu ogun odun pada*” (A single statement is enough to turn around a twenty-year old decision) implies that one word from the king can transform any situation. “*Ibi ti a nlo la nwo, a kii wo ibi ti a ti sibu*” (We focus on where we are going and not where we had fallen) is directed at the king who had been in a depressed state for so long. She urges the king to not focus on past misfortunes but look forward to seeing the brightness and greatness ahead. “*Tbaje eniyan ko da ise Oluma duro*” (The wickedness of man cannot stop the work of God) with these words, Ayomide reminds the king that the wickedness of men cannot stop God’s wonderful plan.

Chapter 4

Yoruba Musical Traditions: its role in the opera

From the mid-1500s, migration and immigration has led to acculturation and cross-culturation globally: Blacks mingling with Whites, languages being assimilated into a new community/country, music cultures fusing together, and an intermixture of cuisines and delicacies, etc. Migration, tourism, and travel still played a huge role in acculturation and cultural fusion even after the era of the transatlantic slave trade. Though opera started in Europe, over the past centuries, it has spread to various parts of the world. Unfortunately, the new developing and underrepresented population in the opera world is not celebrated enough because we still see opera through the lens of Europeanism. Rather than exploring and researching the cross culture that has evolved over time, current performance practices remain stuck in the canons and accomplishments of the past. People say, “don’t fix what is not broken.”³⁸ Although opera culture is not necessarily “broken,” the world of opera has spread its wings far and wide, and the growth of new innovations which decolonize, nourish and nurture have yet to be sufficiently acknowledged. Though underrepresented, indigenous opera has been and is still being performed in several African nations including Nigeria.

Nigerian operatic styles can be classified into two categories. One is the Nigerian folk opera, and the other is the Nigerian classical folk opera. From its inception, Nigerian folk opera has been given different names, including Nigerian folk music drama, Nigerian dance drama, and the Nigerian theater. These Nigerian operatic forms are composed and

³⁸ Attributed to Thomas Bert Lance

https://www.bookbrowse.com/expressions/detail/index.cfm/expression_number/326/if-it-aint-broke-dont-fix-it

performed in all of the three major Nigerian languages, but, for the sake of this project, I will be talking about Yoruba folk opera and Yoruba classical folk opera.

A variety of Yoruba folk operas emerged in the early 1940s from the Southwestern part of Nigeria. They comprise colorful African costumes, a brilliant sense of mime, folklore, music, and traditional drumming. These works are created for a local audience. They use topics and themes based on the Nigerian scenery that range from modern-day satire to historical myths and tragedies. The Yoruba folk opera is deeply ingrained in the Yoruba tradition with elements that showcases the culture. Performed entirely in Yoruba, they are easily understood by a non-native speaker with the aid of a translated synopsis and supertitles, as is done frequently in the United States with non-English European operas. The typical composer of the Yoruba folk opera has had little or no formal training in music; however, they have a formal modern school education, and in some cases, additional training in a profession which may or may not be in the performing arts.

Yoruba folk opera is known to emanate from three themes: a folktale, a farcical social or economic satire, or a mythological story³⁹ gleaned from oral tradition. The text and music are developed by interpolating liturgies from different religious traditions.⁴⁰ There are many theater companies performing these works and some of the most famous Nigerians who created ensembles specializing in these works include Kolawole Ogunmola⁴¹ (*The*

³⁹ African/Nigerian myths like the stories about Orunmila, Sango, Yemoja, Obatala etc. These are myths about Yoruba gods

⁴⁰ These religious facets include Christian, Muslim, and traditional worship

⁴¹ "Kola Ogunmola, original name Elijah Kolawole Ogunmola, (born Nov. 11, 1925, Okemesi, Nigeria—died 1973), Nigerian actor, mime, director, and playwright who took Yoruba folk opera (drama that combines Christian themes with traditional Yoruba folklore, music and dancing, and music popular in urban culture) and developed it into a serious theatre form through his work with his Ogunmola Traveling Theatre (founded c. 1947). He was also widely regarded as one of the most brilliant actors in Africa in the 1950s and '60s."

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Kola Ogunmola." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 1, 2022.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kola-Ogunmola>.

Palmwine Drinkard and Love of Money), Duro Ladipo⁴² (*Oba Koso [The King Did Not Hang]* and *Eda [Everyman]*), and Hubert Ogunde⁴³ (*Yoruba, Ronu! [Yorubas, Think!] Journey to Heaven*). Each of these groups has initiated a unique style shaped by the inclination of its founder. The founders/owners are responsible for writing, adapting, producing, and arranging the music for these operas. Sometimes they are found performing the lead roles in their productions.

While the Yoruba folk opera leans towards a more authentic Yoruba indigenous cultural style, the Yoruba classical folk opera fuses both the Yoruba indigenous cultural style and the Western classical style. Ayo Oluranti's *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín* is an example of a Yoruba classical folk opera because it showcases all the elements of a Nigerian classical folk opera. Some features of the Yoruba/Nigerian⁴⁴ classical folk opera are: African folktale or freshly written storyline, use of religious stories (bible stories, Islamic tales, or traditional worship tales), African costumes intermixed with Western costumes, use of both African and Western drums, Western orchestral instruments combined with African musical instruments, African and Western dance interpolated, and Yoruba/Nigerian languages sometimes intermixed with English.

⁴² "Duro Ladipo, (born Dec. 18, 1931, Oshogbo, Nigeria—died Mar. 11, 1978, Oshogbo), Nigerian dramatist whose innovative folk operas incorporating ritual poetry and traditional rhythms performed on indigenous instruments were based on Yoruba history." Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Duro Ladipo." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 14, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Duro-Ladipo>

⁴³ "Hubert Ogunde, (born 1916, Ososa, near Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria—died April 4, 1990, London, Eng.), Nigerian playwright, actor, theatre manager, and musician, who was a pioneer in the field of Nigerian folk opera (drama in which music and dancing play a significant role). He was the founder of the Ogunde Concert Party (1945), the first professional theatrical company in Nigeria. Often regarded as the father of Nigerian theatre, Ogunde sought to reawaken interest in his country's indigenous culture." Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Hubert Ogunde." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 1, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hubert-Ogunde>.

⁴⁴ These are grouped together because the Yoruba classical folk opera is a part of the Nigerian Classical folk opera and share the same characteristics.

The Yoruba/Nigerian classical folk opera evolved during the early 1960s. Though this is a growing genre in Nigerian music, more classically trained composers have continued to write new works in the genre. Some famous Nigerian classical folk opera composers are Laz Ekwueme⁴⁵ (*A Night in Bethlehem*), Angelo Gabriel Ekum⁴⁶ (*Maranatha*), Bode Omojola⁴⁷ (*Kola Ogunmola's the Palmwine Drinkard* and *Queen Moremi*), Pierre Audiger⁴⁸ (*Ayanfè*), and Akin Euba⁴⁹ (*Chaka*) to mention a few. In the opera *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin*, we see a fusion of both African and Western musical instruments. However, the core elements of the Yoruba tradition are evidently showcased in the music, folktale and costumes.

Oriki: Craft, Language, and Ritual

⁴⁵ Lazarus Edward Nnanyelu Ekwueme (born 28 January 1936) popularly known as Laz Ekwueme is a Nigerian musicologist, composer, scholar and actor. He is one of the pioneer lecturers of music in Nigeria and also a prolific writer. He is a scholar who has written numerous articles and books on music, especially the role of music in the lives of Africans and Africans in diaspora. He is the traditional ruler of Oko Town kingdom. Actor Laz Ekwueme: Biography and Net Worth. 2020. *Ken Information Blog* (blog). February 16, 2020. <https://keninfo.com.ng/2020/02/16/actor-laz-ekwueme-biography-and-net-worth/>.

⁴⁶ Angelo Gabriel Ekum is a 26-year-old self-taught Nigerian composer. Angelo's style is varied and ranges across sacred and secular choral works, as well as purely instrumental pieces. He is also a seasoned wordsmith who supplies the text to most of his works. His works are especially loved for their very expressive melodies and sugarcoated harmonies.

⁴⁷ Omojola is a professor, composer and a researcher whose research focuses on African music, with emphasis on West African, Nigerian, and Yorùbá traditions. His work has explored indigenous and modern musical traditions, and addressed themes including performance practice, creative ethnomusicology, music, identity, and social dynamics, music and politics, diasporic perspectives, and intercultural aesthetics. Olabode Omojola : Department of Music and Dance : UMass Amherst. Accessed January 13, 2022. <https://www.umass.edu/music/member/olabode-omojola>

⁴⁸ Pierre Audiger is a pianist/composer and actor of the Jean-Laurent Cochet Acting School Paris. Having graduated as a Piano Scholar from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Pierre has also been composing since the age of 17. He wrote a Nigerian opera with his now wife, April Atinuke Audiger, who directed the opera. Pierre Audiger. Beethoven Music School. Accessed January 13, 2022. <http://www.beethovenmusicschool.com/pierre-audiger.html>.

⁴⁹ Olatunji Akin Euba was born April 28th, 1935 and died April 14th, 2020. He was a Nigerian composer, musicologist and pianist. His scholarly interests included musicology and ethnomusicology of modern interculturalism. Akin Euba, Nigerian Composer Born April 28, 1935. 2008. *AfriClassical* (blog). April 28, 2008. <https://africlassical.blogspot.com/2008/04/akin-euba-nigerian-composer-born-april.html>.

Oríkì is a culturally significant tradition within Yoruba communities, which can be translated in various ways including “praise poem,” “song praises,” “praise names,” “attributive names,” “titles,” and “verbal salutes.” The Yoruba tradition of religious praise and attributive appellations is portrayed in their custom of reciting *oríkì* to honor people, which is an oral tradition passed down through generations. *Oríkì* is divided into four main categories based on the recipient of the praise: *oríkì orile* is sung to family and lineages, *oríkì ilu* is sung for community members, *oríkì inagije* for prominent people either dead or alive, the last *oríkì* is the *oríkì òrìsà* which is a praise sung to a living ruler or public figure.⁵⁰ The opera *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórìn* features the *oríkì òrìsà* in the final scene.

According to Tunji Vidal’s article on “Oríkì in Traditional Yoruba Music,” “*oríkì* is a descriptive song.” It describes a person's lineage, traits, virtues, strengths, shortcomings, and distinctive characteristics. Sometimes, it explains the town from which they come and then describes its landscape and culture. Yoruba monarchs and nobility recruit official singers and drummers in Yoruba villages. On certain occasions, the primary responsibility of these entertainers is to praise their masters and lords. This exaltation consists mostly of blazoning the recipient's names, heritage, lineage, characteristics, actions, and personality. The *emi* (poetry) form of *oríkì* is sung with a high-pitched, wailing vocal tone, but the *ijálá* (traditional literature) is more acoustically intensive, spoken, and open. This version is dedicated to the *orìsà*, who may be a king, a queen, a deity, a person with a noble history, or someone who is currently gloriously ruling. Occasionally, this version is performed by a cult group.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Lindon, Thomas. “Oríkì Òrìsà: The Yoruba Prayer of Praise.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 20, no. 2 (1990): 205–24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1581369>.

⁵¹ Tunji Vidal. “Oríkì in Traditional Yoruba Music.” *African Arts* 3, no. 1 (1969): 56–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3334460>.

Similar to poetry, *oríkè* has distinct musical and poetic forms. It is usually a single-verse poem that varies in length ranging from three to fifteen lines with some longer exceptions. The *oríkè* has a major recitative part which is usually sung non-metrically and a short metric song allowing a steady accompaniment which climaxes towards the end. In most ceremonies, festivals, or vigils where *oríkè* plays a major part, the closing song signifies the beginning of the dancing which leads to a longer song. When the musician who chants the *oríkè* begins the song portion, they are usually joined by a drum accompaniment and echoing singing and dancing from the audience or community. The drum accompaniment of *oríkè* is typically in a 6/8 rhythm. The tonal structure of the music is based on the tonal inflection and structure of the language. The tonal frame can be inverted or transposed up or down as long as the inflection and undulation of the words are not altered. The pitch can also be tempered to create varied musical effects. Yoruba native speakers and people who have profound knowledge of *oríkè*s can distinguish the area from which an *oríkè* originates based on its tonal structures, frames and styles.⁵² In this opera, the *oríkè* is featured in the final scene where Ayomide greets the King and sings praises to him. Written by Abolade Daud Olamide—a specialist in Yoruba Language and *oríkè*--, the *oríkè* is sung with heightened speech to lift the spirit of the King and to remind him of how powerful he is.

Dance Traditions

One unique feature of this opera is the opening percussion overture that showcases dancers. In *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín* several styles of dances were incorporated into the dance choreography to showcase the Yoruba cultural dances that will be described. In the overture

⁵² Tunji Vidal, 1969.

and finale, the dancers are showcased at the festival square. These dances could be seen from the lens of Europeanism as similar to the introductory ballet dance in the French operas. However, in Nigeria, it is ubiquitous to find a passerby dancing lightly or nodding to music played in the background in the middle of the streets in broad daylight. In various towns and cities, it is not out of the ordinary to hear loud music played in public places such as the markets, malls, small stores, clubs, churches, roadside vendors, and transportation vehicles. Moreso, during festivals, African drumming and dances are displayed and performed at market squares, intersection between streets, and on the roadside.

Dancing, singing and drumming are integrated in the culture and lifestyle of the Yoruba people from cradle (naming ceremonies) to grave (funerals). In each ceremony, there are special significant dances that are performed. These dances are also presented as special performances at significant royalty and king coronation ceremonies. Some other ceremonies include historic festivals, initiation rites, ancestral remembrance ceremonies, and recreational dance. The recreation dances are performed primarily for relaxation and entertainment and are broadly divided into two categories: *Àlùjò* (social leisure dances) and *Ijó ìtágé* (theater entertainment dances). These terms can be used interchangeably, for it possible for *Àlùjò* to be performed as *Ijó ìtágé* and vice versa. One major distinction between them is that *Àlùjò* has a basic structure and performance technique know-how is not needed. While *Ijó ìtágé* are formally created and designed for an audience interested in being entertained.⁵³

Through performance tactics such as stunning costumes, masks, choreographic formations, and symbolic body gestures, the structured form of *Ijó ìtágé* strives for dramatic impact and aesthetic appeal. *Ijó ìtágé* performances typically range from severe acrobatic

⁵³ Ajayi Omofolabo Soyinka. "Aesthetics of Yoruba Recreational Dances as Exemplified in the Oge Dance." *Dance Research Journal* 21, no. 2 (1989): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478625>.

displays to the aesthetic delight found in the fast manipulation of the body in motion with the most complicated patterns, soft mellow dances with a concentration on rhythmic responsiveness, and appropriate musical movement interpretations. *Bírípo*, *Bàtá*, *Bòlòjò*, *Obitun*, *Àgéré-Ode*, and the revues of the popular *alàrínjò* troupes (groups of itinerant dancers) are examples of *Ijó ìtágé*, or theatre amusement dances. Each of these dances has a distinct stylistic structure that makes it easy to identify. *Biripo*, for example, begins slowly with a gently swaying body, progressing to swings to the left and right before ending in a furious swirl. This climax gives the dance its name, *biripo*, which means 'swirl around.' It originated with harvest festivities in the Ikale/Okitipupa village, a riverine portion of Yorubaland, and is performed by middle-aged men and women.⁵⁴

Bàtá, on the other hand, is a quick, and high intensity dance. It's known for its precise footwork and acute, rapid body jerks and twists. *Bàtá* outfits are simple to enable players to have free, quick movements due to the almost acrobatic nature of the sport. The *Egungun* ancestral memorial institution and the *Sango* (the Yoruba deity of thunder and lightning) worship dances have a lot in common. It's mostly a Yoruba dance tradition from the north. The *alàrínjò* troupe's revues frequently incorporate *Bàtá* dance styles and the *Egungun's* masked method into their performances, but the troupe's dances are notable for their satirical caricatures of current and historical events.⁵⁵

Egbado's *Bòlòjò* is a dance that can be done by both sexes. Slowly twisting and swaying the torso, as well as taking little forward and backward steps, is the hallmark of this style. The name “*Bòlòjò*” seeks to express the onomatopoeic impression of an elegantly gliding corpulent

⁵⁴ Ajayi Omofolabo Soyinka, 1898.

⁵⁵ Ajayi Omofolabo Soyinka, 1898.

body. The origins of the *Bòlòjò* dance form can be traced back to the *Gelede* dances, which were performed to entice witches to use their "powers" for good.⁵⁶

The *Ijó itàgè* dances evolved from social or religious rituals, or from professionally connected dances at festivals. Both ritual and professional dance forms have developed and established repertoires of movements that typically conform to theatrical conventions and aesthetics. Rituals are composed of coded signs whose efficacy is contingent upon specified and established performance processes, and the dances associated with them must have comparable structures. Numerous professions also have set movements from which the workers' dances naturally (consciously or unintentionally) draw inspiration.⁵⁷

On the other hand, *Àlìjò* dances lack a shared repertoire of movement. Performers come from a variety of backgrounds and draw on a variety of creative experiences. While social leisure dances can be regimented, they are adaptable to new styles. As a result, the dances have a high turnover of constantly changing shapes. Old ones can readily be discarded, and new ones generated, just as others are continuously adopted and adapted as they traverse time and space.⁵⁸

Highlife Music

The aria *Gbajumo* which is also the finale is composed in the highlife genre to showcase the roots of highlife in Yoruba music. This genre was specifically included in *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin* to allow the introduction of the highlife music in opera. The birthplace of Highlife music is widely regarded as being in Ghana in the nineteenth century. Ghanaian brass bands

⁵⁶ Ajayi Omofolabo Soyinka, 1898.

⁵⁷ Ajayi Omofolabo Soyinka, 1898.

⁵⁸ Ajayi Omofolabo Soyinka, 1898.

performed the first recognized performances. It quickly acquired popularity in the country and expanded to neighboring West African republics, including Nigeria, in the 1930s. Instruments from Europe and the United States are used in Highlife, a West African music genre. It is influenced by Ghanaian and Nigerian musical traditions such as Akan and Kpanlogo, but also by jazz, rock, hip-hop, and Afrobeat. As its popularity grew, new sub-categories developed, such as *juju* music, which originated in Nigeria's western regions. Juju revolutionized highlife by incorporating Yoruba drum rhythms, shortened guitar melodies, and, of course, lyrics spoken in Yoruba or English, occasionally, both.⁵⁹

The word "highlife" refers to the social class that listened to music at the time, which was the upper-class elite. Highlife music was an intentional break from the waltz, foxtrot, and cha-cha ballroom dances.⁶⁰ In the 1930s, highlife gained popularity inland and eastward along the coast, gaining a particularly big following in Nigeria. There, highlife underwent a significant transformation: asymmetrical drum rhythms drawn from the Yoruba people's traditional drumming techniques were blended with syncopated (displaced accent) guitar melodies to accompany songs spoken in Yoruba or English. By the mid-1960s, highlife had lost a significant portion of its following guitar-driven popular forms. One of these forms, *juju*, a largely Yoruba derivative of highlife, earned broad international notoriety in the 1980s and remained popular in Nigerian "hotels" or nightclubs well into the twenty-first century.⁶¹

From the 1950's to the 1970's, highlife music was the most popular in Nigeria. Hundreds of bands played across the country, with crowds dancing to live music in bars and

⁵⁹ John Collins. "The Early History of West African Highlife Music." *Popular Music* 8, no. 3 (1989): 221–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/931273>.

⁶⁰ PR2J3C4. "Highlife Music in Nigeria." *PR2J3C4 - Nigeria @ Her Best* (blog), December 18, 2015. <https://the234project.com/entertainment-and-sport/nigeria/highlife-music-in-nigeria/>.

⁶¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Highlife." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 13, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/art/highlife-African-music>.

dance halls. E. T. Mensah, dubbed the "King of Highlife" by Ghanaians, and his Tempos Band were the 1950's most prominent highlife performers. Bobby Benson & His Combo were Ghana's first successful Nigerian highlife band. Jim Lawson & the Mayor's Dance Band, who attained national prominence in the mid-1970s, came after Benson. Prince Nico Mbarga and his band Rocafil Jazz, as well as the African Brothers Band, were also prominent highlife musicians. Highlife music is still played today in Ghana, Nigeria, and other African countries, and because of the internet, it can be accessed from anywhere in the world without difficulty. Unlike in eastern Nigeria, where highlife music is enjoyed for festivals like weddings and funerals, highlife music in western Nigeria is revered as a cultural touchstone. Although Lagos is often regarded as the capital of Nigerian highlife music, other towns, such as Port Harcourt, Onitsha, and Benin City, are also known for their love of the genre.⁶²

Afrobeat Music

The aria *Tin tin to jan to* showcases the Afrobeat genre of Yoruba music. This genre was specifically included in *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin* to allow the introduction of the afrobeat music in opera. Afrobeat is an amalgamation of Yoruba music, West African highlife, free jazz and funk that was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Fela Kuti,⁶³ a Nigerian artist known for his eccentricity, musical prowess, and involvement in post-colonial African politics, is credited with coining the term *Afrobeat*.⁶⁴ Jazz players are particularly drawn to the sound of Afrobeat, which has influenced performers outside of the genre. Roy Ayers, Randy Weston, Branford

⁶² "Highlife Music in Nigeria." *PR2J3C4 - Nigeria @ Her Best* (blog), December 18, 2015.

⁶³ From the early 1960s until his death in 1997, Fela Kuti and his band Africa 70 were the key architects of Afrobeat, defining its vast span and fiercely groovy sound. Based on his life and music, the Tony Award-winning musical *Fela!* was created.

⁶⁴ Mary Pettas. "Fela Kuti and the Legacy of Afrobeat." *Culture Trip*, May 22, 2012. <https://theculturetrip.com/africa/nigeria/articles/fela-kuti-s-afrobeat-legacy/>.

Marsalis, and Brian Eno are just a few of the artists that have acknowledged Afrobeat as an influence.⁶⁵ Musical elements such as chanted vocals, intricate intersecting rhythms, and percussion were intertwined with social and political commentary. Many influences, including Yoruba rhythms, Ghanaian Highlife, jazz, American funk and pidgin English were used to create the varied musical aspects. The reason Fela picked pidgin English was to avoid tribalizing his songs and instead aim for a broad audience. Fela's long-winded and theatrical concerts with at least 10 or more band members included polyrhythmic beats with counsel for young Africans to defeat their oppressors in the post-colonial era. To challenge the political injustice and military corruption in Nigeria, his lyrics were aggressive. Fela encouraged other Africans to become self-sufficient and to challenge oppressive power systems as African states reorganized following liberation.⁶⁶

African Percussion Instruments



Figure I. Image of *sèkèrè*
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, page vii, image embedded in music.

⁶⁵ New World Encyclopedia contributors, "Afrobeat," *New World Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Afrobeat&oldid=1052076> (accessed January 20, 2022).

⁶⁶ Beat. "The History of Afrobeat." Accessed January 20, 2022. <https://vocal.media/beat/the-history-of-afrobeat>.

Though this opera fuses both African and Western orchestration, this section will talk about the African percussion instruments used by Ayo Oluranti in this opera. The shekere spelled *sèkèrè* by the Yorubas is a polished gourd around which a net of beads or cowrie shells are wound around. See Figure I above. The gourd is made from vine gourds that grow on the ground. The instrument is made by drying up the gourd for several months, removing the seeds and then skillfully placing beads on a thread round the dried and shaped gourd. It is commonly used in West African and Latin American folkloric traditions. It can either be hit against the hand or shaken to produce sound. It is important to note that the piercing sound of the *sèkèrè* is to be carefully balanced with the rest of the ensemble.⁶⁷



Figure II. Image of *àkúbà*

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omọ̀ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, page viii, image embedded in music.

In Figure II above, the *àkúbà* is a single-headed hand-beaten conga-like drum. Other hand-beaten drum alternatives include the *ògidó*, and the *kpàlóngò* (peg drum). *Àkúbà* is designated to three small Yoruba conga drums. These drums are generally bigger than the conga and have a broader array of sounds. They are deeper than the conga in pitch. In an Afrobeat ensemble, *àkúbà* usually assumes a lead role in the ensemble. Played either with sticks or hand beaten, the Akuba drums help in expressing various tones of a spoken dialect.⁶⁸ The

⁶⁷ Ayo Oluranti's notes on the score

⁶⁸ "On West African Instrumentation." *OkayAfrica*, 1 Aug. 2013, <https://www.okayafrika.com/instruments-west-africa/>.

àkùbà part is scored for three hand-beaten drums. Any of the listed drum-type above or conga-like drums can be used subject to condition that the selected drums have the ‘low-mid-high’ pitch relationship. The drums are to be tuned as ‘baritone-bass’ drums within a register range that stays clear of the *ìyá ilù* ‘alto-tenor’ register. As shown in Figure III, the *àkùbà* drums are used as both rhythm and speech instruments. Texts are therefore written in the score to clarify phrases and sub-phrases when the drums take on the speech function.⁶⁹

Figure III: *Akuba* speaking Yoruba in Asuramu
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 25, m. 137 “Asuramu”.



Figure IV. Image of *agogo*
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, page ix, image embedded in music.

The *agogo* is a single or multiple-flanged iron bell (figure IV). The *agogo*, also called the *agogo* bell, is an instrument of African origin. It consists of two cone-like shaped iron bells connected by a hook-shaped iron rod handle. The bells vary in size and are welded to the end of the handle in order to allow the larger bell to extend further than the smaller bell. The bells

⁶⁹ Ayo Oluranti’s notes on the score

are beaten with a wood or iron stick.⁷⁰ In most compositions, the *agogo* plays the role of the tempo/timekeeper. The *agogo* part is scored for three bells with three distinctive pitches. The bells are required to replicate the three speech tone levels of the Yorùbá language: Thus, in addition to the rhythmic function of the *agogo*, it takes up speech and melodic functions. It is important to balance the piercing sound of the *agogo* with the rest of the ensemble. The composer also notes that "Cowbells can be used as an alternative to the *agogo*."⁷¹

The language of the talking drum



Figure V. Image of talking drum

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin*, page vii, image embedded in music.

In *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin*, the talking drum (figure V) plays the role of both lead in the call and response and also the echo. The talking drum is also featured in the *oríkì* where Ayomide praises the king. Throughout the opera, we hear the talking drum as a resonant

⁷⁰ *Agogó* · Grinnell College Musical Instrument Collection · Grinnell College Libraries. <https://omeka-s.grinnell.edu/s/MusicalInstruments/item/2681>. Accessed 14 Jan. 2022.

⁷¹ Ayo Oluranti's notes on the score

voice that speaks, responds or echos the Yoruba language. The Yoruba talking drum is a double- membrane, hourglass-shaped, pressure drum of the Yoruba people of the southwestern Nigeria. The term pressure drum is derived from the structure of the instrument which is broader at the ends and curves into a smaller diameter at the middle. The drum is suspended between the upper left arm and chest; the left hand maneuvers the leather tensed strings that the two membranes, while the drum is played by hitting a curved stick held on the right hand. The pitch level of the drum is controlled by tightening or loosening the strings regulated by the player. The drum can emulate the tones and glides of the spoken Yoruba language. This drum has its equivalents in Melanesia, East Africa, and Asia. The most common type of talking is the dundun drum. The family of the talking drum comprises a set of six drums. These include: the *iyá ìlù* (the mother of the drums), *gùdùgùdù*, *kerikeri*, *ifájú*, *kànàngó*, and *gàngan*. Some refer to the talking drums as the hourglass-drum because of their formation and structure.⁷²

The drum is designed from a carved wooden tube shaped like an hourglass and is covered on both ends by treated goat skin. The hollow part of the drum creates the oscillation and the resonation that takes place when beaten. Pebbles inside the drum aid the production of a subtle rattling effect. The opposite sides of the drum are then tapered to allow the appropriate positioning of the leather tensed strings which also serves as the accessory for binding the skin surfaces of the drum in place. The main purpose of the strings is to exert tension that tightens or loosens the surface to aid the production of high or low pitches, respectively. For the drum to be carried effortlessly, a long horizontal handle is

⁷² Examples are the Changgo drums of Korea, the tubular drums, the barrel drums of India, the tama from Senegal and Gambia and the taiko drums of Japan.

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "dùndún pressure drum." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 28, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/art/dundun-pressure-drum>.

attached to the drum. A unique type of mallet used for striking the drum is a rubber covered stick shaped in the form of a hook.⁷³

Ruth Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa*, Chapter 17 on "Drum Language and Literature" highlights two types of communication through drums. The first is a non-direct linguistic basis in which prearranged codes are used as signals to represent a message. The second type is a direct representation of the spoken language, thereby simulating the tone and rhythm of actual speech.⁷⁴

The talking drum is known as an imitator of the human voice. "Just as a Semitic language is intelligible if written with the consonants only, so many African languages are intelligible if represented by its tones alone. The talking drum does not use a kind of Morse system, as imagined by most non-Africans."⁷⁵ A vital role of the talking drum is to praise a king and honor the traditional tribal leaders. It is also used for accompanying dances, religious chants, and traditional festivals. In former times, it was used as a means of communication and sending coded messages. The musical sentences produced by the drummers could be philosophical, comical, sarcastic; it can also be used to give advice, criticism and to pray. The drum tones are the same as we hear in the Yoruba language with exclusions of the consonants. This means that the proficiency of the drummer in Yoruba language is a necessity for a successful performance. The drummer incorporates the tonal features and pitches of the language into his technical drumming sentences. It would be

⁷³ Arewa, Ojo, and Niyi Adekola. Redundancy Principles of Statistical Communications as Applied to Yoruba Talking-Drum.

⁷⁴ Ruth Finnegan. "Drum Language and Literature." In *Oral Literature in Africa*, 1st ed., 1:467–84. Open Book Publishers, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vjsmr.27>.

⁷⁵ Ulli Beier. "The Talking Drums of the Yoruba." *African Music* 1, no. 1 (1954): 29–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30249397>.

impossible to feature the undulating tones of the language without a significant understanding and fluency of the language.

Chapter 5

Musical Analysis of the Opera

The Overture

In order to show how this project decolonizes opera, the following analysis shows the interpolation of the aforementioned Yoruba cultural elements in a traditionally European genre of music. Unlike other operas that start with a full orchestra overture, this opera starts with a percussion-only overture which immediately showcases the intricacy of percussion instruments in the Yoruba culture. The percussion overture of the opera *Omọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin* is written to depict the festive nature of the Yoruba culture and display some dance traditions of the Yoruba people during the festivals highlighted earlier. To the Yoruba communities, these festivals are such an eminent part of the culture that if this overture is eliminated from this opera, it would be an incomplete depiction of the Yoruba culture and might even be regarded as a disfiguration of culture by indigenous Yoruba people.

A major part of the festivity is the performance of the *oríkì*. The overture starts with a short *oríkì* (praise chant) that is then echoed by the *Ìyá ilù* (the mother drum of the talking drum family). Lyrics are shown in table III below.

Table III: Partial libretto of opening *oríkì*

Yoruba	English translation
Ayomide o!	Ayomide!
Omo Oluwaseyi o!	The daughter of Oluwaseyi!
Lulu fun won!	Play the drums for them!
Korin fun won!	Sing for them!
Ki nwon gba pe baba re lo l'orin!	Prove to them that you are a descendant of music!

This happens within the first 10 measures of the music as seen in Figure VI below. It is important to notice that an exclamation mark is used at the end of every phrase. These exclamation marks notify us that *oríkìs* are sung or spoken with a heightened and intensified pitch. It can be misconstrued to be a call or a holla. *Oríkìs* can be a call or a holla (Ayomide o! m. 1) but they cannot be limited and stereotyped as just that. On m. 12, the temple block is introduced, and this also ushers in the *shékere*. As seen in example 2, m. 16, the call and echo between the voice and the *iyá ilù* is reversed with the *iyá ilù* calling and the voice echoing. The call and echo both join in unison at the end of m. 17.

I. Overture

The musical score is titled "I. Overture" and is set at a tempo of quarter note = 120. It is divided into two systems of staves.

System 1 (Measures 1-10):

- Temple Blocks:** Includes staves for Iyáálù, Akuba, Shékéré, and Agogo. The Iyáálù staff contains musical notation with lyrics: "A-yy-mi-de o!", "O-mq O-lu-wa -ge-yi o!", "Lu-lu fun wgn!", and "Kò - rin fun wgn".
- Speech:** Contains the lyrics: "A-yy-mi-de o!", "O-mq O-lu-wa -ge-yi o!", "Lu-lu fun wgn!", and "Kò - rin fun wgn".
- Annotations:** Red arrows labeled "Echo" point from the Iyáálù staff to the Speech staff. Red arrows labeled "Call" point from the Speech staff to the Iyáálù staff.

System 2 (Measures 11-17):

- T. Bl. (Temple Block):** Includes staves for Iyá, Akb., Skr., Ag., and Sp. The Iyá staff contains musical notation with lyrics: "ki nwgñ gha pe ba-ba... rē lo fo-rin!", "A-wa fa-gba", and "A-wa".
- Sp. (Speech):** Contains the lyrics: "ki nwgñ gha pe ba-ba... rē lo fo-rin!", "A-wa fa-gba", and "A-wa".
- Annotations:** Red arrows labeled "Call" point from the Iyá staff to the Sp. staff. Red arrows labeled "Echo" point from the Sp. staff to the Iyá staff.

Figure VI: Excerpt from overture

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omo Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 1, mm. 1-17 "overture".

The *agogo* comes in on m. 20 and this instrument is used as the tempo setter throughout this piece. Shortly after the *shekere* comes in the *akuba* is introduced. For the next 21 mm. (m. 21 to m. 42), the *Akuba* is showcased as a solo instrument accompanied by the *shekere*. On m. 43, the *iyá ilù* and the temple blocks speak in unison the words in table IV.

Table IV: Concluding lyrics of opening *oríkì*

Yoruba	English translation
Awa l'agba	We are the elders
Adiye funfun l'agba adiye	The white chicken is superior to the chicken

In most Yoruba cultures, the elders and council of chiefs are known to wear the color white during these festivals to distinguish them from the members of the community. This proverb is usually performed and spoken during these festivals as a short *oríkì*. In the proverb shown on table 4, the elders are portrayed as the white chickens who are superior to the other chickens, who are the members of the community.

Improvisation is inextricable from the Yoruba culture. It would be considered another culture disfiguration if the concept of improvisation is disencumbered from this opera. In a typical Yoruba festival, the performers and drummers are so accustomed to the structure of the music that they can go for weeks without running out of fresh ideas for improvisation. From m. 49 to the end of the overture, the composer leaves the music blank leaving the *Ìyá ilù* and temple blocks to explore with improvisation.

Though the aforementioned festivals are large and elaborate and deeply rooted in the cultural values of the Yoruba people, the overture is a miniature model use to showcase this integral part of the Yoruba traditions. Since most of these festivals are held outdoors in front of the market squares, intersection between streets, and on the roadside, this overture is staged in front of the market square. In this case, Ayomide and the percussionists are the performers.

Scene One

While the majority of operas employ sung dialogue and recitative, others employ spoken dialogue as well. In *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin* all dialogues are spoken with background orchestration. Immediately following the overture, the father (Mr. Oluwaseyi), mother (Mrs. Oluwaseyi), and daughter Ayomide engage in a conversation. Ayomide sings "*Asuramu*" at the end of this scene.

Narrative/Dramatic Elements

The opera opens with a conversation between the protagonist Ayomide and her parents. The joyful family resides in Oladuro, where they are all farmers. Mr. Oluwaseyi enters to see Ayo with her headphones once more, rather than ready to accompany them to the farm. Ayo confesses to her father, trembling, that she was merely listening to music by her friend Deji and was absolutely planning to accompany them to the farm. Her father calmly informs her that while she cannot earn a living as a singer, she can certainly earn a living and support her husband as a farmer. The mother enters in search of them and inquires as to why they are taking so long.

Ayo shows her parents, hesitantly, a letter of acceptance from a local university showing she was also awarded a scholarship. The parents are overjoyed until they learn she will be studying music. Music? Who does that, the mother inquires. She eventually calms down and explains that while she is proud of her daughter, she is concerned that this may not be the best course of action given the family's farming business. "The life of a musician is unpredictable," Mr. Oluwaseyi explains. Ayo explains that music is her passion and that she will be fine with their support. Both parents concur and are now enthusiastic about their daughter's scholarship award and future goals. So, Ayo goes on to school to study and becomes

a wonderful musician. She sings the aria “*Asuramu*” as an advice to all striving musicians like her.

Musical Elements

In the aria "*Asuramu*," we'll look at how the composer demonstrates various Yoruba art music features in the music. On measure 1 of the aria, the *agogo* establishes the tempo. On m. 2, the marimba and piano enter with syncopated staccato accented eighth notes in the key of F sharp minor. Though the staccato pedals are in f minor, the music is set throughout in the Dorian mode. On m. 6, the *iyá ilù* (*Iyaalu* as written in the score), and the voice enter in speech rhythm unison.¹¹⁹ The gong/tam-tam enters on the final beat of m. 9 with sustained notes, followed by the marimba and piano with syncopated staccato accented eighth notes, with a repeated structure followed by the voice and *iyá ilù*. On m. 21, the temple block performs a brief solo, heralding the arrival of the singing voice on m. 23. The composer now employs the call and response technique between the voice and the *iyá ilù*. On m. 27, when the flute softly takes up the solo from the temple blocks, the interplay between the vocal and the *iyá ilù* is interrupted by the high-pitched flute. While the *agogo* continues to serve as the timekeeper, the marimba and piano return with their syncopated staccato accented eighth notes in the key of F sharp minor. On m. 36, the composer used unison and repetition (mm. 36, 37 and 41, 42) between the strings and the voice, with the cello playing plucked accented bass notes. The *akuba* and *shekere* are introduced on m. 43. While the voice and strings remain in unison, the composer employs staccato harmonic lines for the strings, and the vocal keeps a legato melody line. While the strings remain in unison until m. 51, the vocal melody moves the interval of a fourth above in m. 50 between the voice and strings.

From m. 54 to 60, the unison is now between the voice and marimba, and all the strings respectively while the percussion instruments play simultaneously. On m. 61, there is modulation to F sharp major, however, the music is still in the Dorian mode. The composer also uses double stops accented pizzicato with the strings. The double stops continue till m. 65, however, the string now plays arco on m. 63. Once again, the voice and the *iyá ìlù* are in unison from m. 66 to 70. On m. 72, the key returns to F sharp minor and at this point there is unison between the voice and the strings.

Another key change occurs on m. 86 as the music moves to D major. On m. 93, the composer shares the interplay of unison between the voice, the *iyá ìlù* and the first violin part. This unison trio continues until m. 100 where a 4-m. pizzicato counterpoint occurs between the first and second violin parts and the viola. This ushers in another interplay of unison between the voice and the marimba from m. 103 to 106. From m. 107, a dominant pedal played with tremolo starts with the first violin part and later moves to the second violin and viola. This dominant pedal creates a transition to a tonic pedal in the new key of A major on m. 111. This ushers in unison between the voice and the strings from m. 114 till m. 126 where the cello adds in a dominant pedal and violin 1 joins. The aria ends with a call and response between the voice and the *akuba* in speech rhythm unison.

Scene Two

Narrative/Dramatic Elements

In scene two, Ayomide performs her monologue as she is faced with some challenges. She sings a recitative and two arias talking herself through all her tribulations and how to come out strong. In this scene, we see Ayomide's numerous career obstacles. Her vocal abilities and prowess appeared to be of little value in the community. She no longer receives invitations to perform, and she became irritated. She reached rock bottom and blamed herself for not listening to her parents and friends who counseled her not to study music and to continue working in the family business (farming). Ayomide had her breakdown moment, allowed herself to feel these emotions, and then found a purpose to overcome them, which resulted in her discovering a greater sense of meaning in her life. This scene is critical to the opera because it depicts the behind-the-scenes meltdowns that opera artists worldwide endure and that no one sees.

Musical Elements

In the recitative *Ki nlo nsele?* (What is going on), the composer unison and repetition. After the roll of the timpani and the agogo (once again playing the role of the timekeeper), the composer establishes the major theme in the music with the marimba and the *iyá ilù* as seen in Figure VII.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Ki nlo nsele". The score is written for multiple instruments and voices. The instruments listed are Timpani, Bass Drum, Temple Blocks, Ìyáàlù, Agogo, Marimba, Speech, and Soprano Solo. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 52. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *mp*, *mf*, *ff*, and *p*. A red box highlights a specific musical theme in the Ìyáàlù and Marimba parts, with an arrow pointing to it from the label "Musical theme". The lyrics "Ki lo nge-ge ni nu a-ye... mi" are written below the Ìyáàlù part.

Figure VII: Excerpt from *Ki nlo nsele*

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 25, m. 137 “*Ki nlo nsele*”.

Throughout this recitative, the composer uses interchangeably a notated tonal speech rhythm,⁷⁶ free speech rhythm,⁷⁷ and a sang melodic vocal line. On m. 16, the voice comes in with a notated tonal speech rhythm which is immediately echoed by the temple blocks on m. 17. While the marimba and the *ìyá ìlù* continues to repeat the major theme, a choir comprising of alto, tenor and bass is introduced in m. 24. On m. 40 and 41, the temple block plays the major theme to usher in the switch to free speech rhythm for the voice on m. 42. As shown in Figure VIII, while the agogo continues to play the timekeeper role, the call and response technique is used between the temple blocks and the *ìyá ìlù* in unison with the marimba.

⁷⁶ This is when the voice speaks the words tonally with a heightened pitch in Yoruba language.

⁷⁷ This is when the voice speaks the Yoruba language in free rhythm without the restriction of notation.

The musical score consists of six staves. From top to bottom: B. D. (Bass Drum), T. Bl. (Tenor Bell), Ìyá (Voice), Ag. (Agogo), Mar. (Marimba), and S. (Soprano). The Ìyá staff has a red box labeled 'Call' above it. The Ag. staff has a red box labeled 'Response' above it. The Mar. staff has a red box labeled 'Still keeping tempo' above it. The S. staff has lyrics: 'n-kan d'o-ju-ru! Se n-kan se mi ni? Se n-kan a-si-se m-be ni nu o-hun mi? Ki-lo se-le ni-nu ai-ye_ mi'. The lyrics 'Ki lo nse-le ni-' are written above the final notes of the Ìyá staff. Red brackets connect the 'Call' and 'Response' boxes to the corresponding musical phrases. A red arrow points from the 'Still keeping tempo' box to the Ag. staff. Measure numbers 4, 5, and 6 are indicated above the S. staff.

Figure VIII: Continuation of *Ki nlo nsele*

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 43, m. 38-47 “*Ki nlo nsele*”

At m. 56, the choir comes in singing the melodic line for the first time in *Ki nlo nsele*.

At this point, the interplay of the call and response technique is between the voice and the *ìyá ìlù* in unison with the marimba. While the agogo continues to keep the tempo, the choir is used as an accompaniment to the call and response as shown in Figure VIII.

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The musical score for Figure IX shows the continuation of 'Ki nlo nsele'. It features multiple staves: Timp., B. D., T. Bl., Iya, Ag., Mar., Sp., S., and Choir. The score includes dynamic markings (p, mf) and annotations such as 'Major theme repeated', 'Response', 'Still keeping tempo', and 'Call'. A large red box highlights the central section of the score, which includes the lyrics 'nu a-ye mi', 'Ki lo nse-le ni - nu a-ye mi', and 'Ki lo nse-le ni - nu a-ye mi'. The score also includes a 'Call' annotation and a note: 'The chorus as an accompaniment to balance the interplay of call and response'. The score concludes with the lyrics 'Ki lo se - le?' and 'Ki lo se - le?'.

Figure IX: Continuation of *Ki nlo nsele*

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 44, m. 55-63 “*Ki nlo nsele*”.

To conclude the music, the voice returns to free speech rhythm and the temple block takes over the repetition of the major theme as seen in Figure IX. Immediately following the recitative, the lament aria begins in the key of g minor. The viola begins the song with a pedal sub-mediant note, ushering in the remainder of the string group on m. 6. The string ensemble performs a 26-m. interlude before the voice enters on m. 27. On m. 51, the marimba is introduced with a tremolo that ranges from soft to loud and back to soft

heralding the entrance of the string ensemble once again on m. 53. Once again, the voice switches to the free speech rhythm on m. 57, while the string ensemble shifts from arco⁷⁸ to pizzicato.⁷⁹ On m. 79, the vocal returns to a sung melodic line, as does the string ensemble. Once again, the marimba ushers in the voice and string ensemble on m. 103. The voice repeats the same melody leading to the end of the aria. The aria concludes with a postlude where the marimba plays a tremolo in octaves that fluctuates from soft to loud and the string ensemble ends with a staccato played on the cello (shown in Figure X).

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Mar. *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* Tremolos fluctuating from soft to loud

Sp.

S. *mp* *mf* *p* End of vocal melody
O wu mi... O wu mi... ki n-yi q-wg a - go pa-da... s'g - hin

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

⁷⁸ playing with bow on the strings

⁷⁹ stop using the bow and use fingers to pluck the strings

The image displays a musical score for a string ensemble. The score is written for five instruments: Maracas (Mar.), Snare Drum (Sp.), Soprano Saxophone (S.), Violin I (Vln. I), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The music is in F sharp minor, as indicated by the key signature. The score begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). A red box highlights the section from measure 126 to the end of the page, which is labeled "Postlude by string ensemble". This section features a series of sixteenth-note patterns in the strings, with a final staccato ending. The score includes various performance instructions such as *pizz.* (pizzicato) and *Final staccato*.

Figure X: Ayomide's lament

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 50, m. 118-134 "Ayomide's lament".

Scene 2's concluding aria, *Tin Tin to Janto To*, is Ayomide's rallying cry to see the light at the end of the tunnel and keep working hard. The words *Tin Tin to Janto To* is an onomatopoeic word that signifies the sound of the bird like cuckoo. This piece is composed in the style Nigerian music's Afrobeat genre. The introductory theme played by the flute illustrates the sound of the bird Ayomide heard singing (shown in Figure XI). This piece begins with a 58-m. prelude that introduces the main aria in F sharp minor on m. 59. The same theme is set still repeated in the Afrobeat part of the aria and is used in other mediums throughout this piece.

Flute

Main musical theme

$\text{♩} = 104$ $\text{♩} = 78$ $\text{♩} = 52$

p *p* *f* *p*

Figure XI: main theme of *Tin-tin to jan to*
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 51, m. 1-9 “*Tin-tin to jan to*”.

In m. 12, the piano enters with an ostinato rhythm that pairs with the flute to establish the overall musical theme as seen in Figure XII.

Fl.

13

p *mf* *p* *mf*

21

Fl.

p

Figure XII: full theme of *Tin-tin to jan to*
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 52, m. 16-23 “*Tin-tin to jan to*”.

The voice enters in m. 28 and is echoed by the Akuba in a short counterpoint outlining the overall musical theme. The key changes from the initial key of B flat major to D major on m. 36. This entire sequence is repeated, and the 58-m. prelude concludes with a simultaneous harmonic interval of thirds between the voice and the flute. The marimba solo introduces the Afrobeat style on m. 59. On m. 65, the clave (as seen in Figure XIII) joins in with an ostinato rhythm that is preponderant throughout the composition.



Figure XIII: Ostinato rhythm, *tin tin to jan to*

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 58, m. 65-69 “*Tin tin to jan to*”.

While the cello and double bass play pizzicato in unison, the interplay of unison is also seen between the bassoon and the contrabassoon which are introduced for the first time on m. 69. A different style of call and response is seen between the voice and the flute on m. 87. The flute responds to the voice with a different musical motif than seen before. While the clave changes from its previous ostinato (shown in Figure XIV), the *shekere* takes over a similar ostinato rhythm.

 Musical notation for Figure XIV showing Sker. (Shekere) and Clv. (Clavichord) parts. The Sker. part starts with a rest, then enters with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, marked with a red box and arrow pointing to it with the text "Similar ostinato to previous clave ostinato". The Clv. part also starts with a rest, then enters with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, marked with a red box and arrow pointing to it with the text "New ostinato". Both parts are marked with a dynamic of *mf*.

Figure XIV: ostinato of *tin tin to jan to*

Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 63, m. 87-89 “*Tin-tin to jan to*”.

In Figure XV m. 121, a counterpoint between the flute and voice is initiated while the marimba continues its solo.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Tin-tin to janto" from the album *Omọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín* by Ayodamope Oluranti. The score is for measures 117-121. It features several instruments and a voice part. The instruments are Flute (Fl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Contrabassoon (Cbsn.), Percussion (Perc.), Akb., Skr., Clavichord (Clv.), Marimba (Mar.), and Piano (Pno.). The voice part (S.) has lyrics: "Ma - ge - re re" and "Tin - tin to".

Annotations in the score include:

- "Counterpoint initiated" (pointing to the flute staff)
- "Marimba continues solo" (pointing to the marimba staff)
- "Voice responds in canon style" (pointing to the voice staff)

Figure XV: Counterpoint in *tin tin to janto*
 Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 70, m. 117-121 "Tin-tin to janto".

The use of call and response is seen again in m. 139 between the voice and the flute. However, both melodic lines harmonize in fifths on m. 142 to reinforce the words *O wípe* (saying). They harmonize in thirds again in m. 147 on the words *a sese* (it is possible). The interplay of the call and echo is seen differently on m. 176 as the flute and voice are a fifth apart. On m. 182, a counterpoint begins with the marimba and is passed along to the cello and

double bass on m. 184. The counterpoint continues in the marimba on m. 186 and almost immediately moves to the flute. As shown in Figure XVI, the aria ends with a final affirmation from the voice saying *ma serere* (I will succeed) on m.189 and the flute playing the first half of the overall musical theme.

The image shows a musical score for the end of the aria "Tin-tin to jan to". The score is written for a full orchestra and a solo voice (S.). The instruments listed are Flute (Fl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Contrabassoon (Cbsn.), Percussion (Perc.), Akb., Skr., Clavichord (Clv.), Marimba (Mar.), Piano (Pno.), and Solo Voice (S.). The score is in 2/4 time and the key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music begins at measure 188. The flute part starts with a rapid sixteenth-note passage, followed by a red box highlighting the first half of the main musical theme. The bassoon part has a red box labeled "First half of main musical theme" with an arrow pointing to the flute's theme. The percussion part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The marimba part has a melodic line. The piano part has a simple accompaniment. The solo voice part has a red box labeled "Final words of affirmation" with an arrow pointing to the words "Ma_ ge re - re_" in measure 189. The words are written as "Ma_ ge re - re_" with a long line under the final "e".

Figure XVI: End of *tin tin to jan to*
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórín*, Page 86, m. 188-190 "Tin-tin to jan to".

Scene Three and Finale Narrative/Dramatic Elements

In the preceding scene, Ayomide had an epiphany while listening to the bird sing, which boosted her confidence and courage. She decided to write a song and perform for her father in this scene. At the festival, other performers came to cheer up the king but to no avail. A violinist was invited to play for the king, but she was playing a half step higher against the piano accompaniment the entire time and didn't even realize. The bakers and cooks prepared food for the king and sang a short ladies chorus titled "song of the maids". Unfortunately, they were clumsy and ended up spilling the food on the floor. The dancers came to dance for the king, but mistakenly slipped and fell. Hence, leaving the king in a more depressed state.

Mr. Oluwaseyi proposed that Ayomide visit the market square and attempt to perform for the king. According to rumor, the king was quite despondent and faced numerous difficulties. Given that Ayomide had recently gone through a similar situation, she assumed that the song she wrote would assist the king in the same way that it assisted her. Ayo and her father decided to visit the festival in the market square, where the king was seated with his wife. Despite being confronted by the guard, Ayomide and her father convinced the guard to let them through. Finally, Ayo is in the king's presence. She bowed in greeting and introduced herself. The chorus sang *Erù Oba* for the first time to honor the king. Ayomide saw that the king is still in a sour mood. She sings an *oríkè* to offer attributive praises to the king, which elevated the king's morale. Villagers join in once again to sing *Erù Oba* as a response to the *oríkè*. This acts as a communal response to Ayo's *oríkè*. The festival ended with everyone singing and dancing in the aria *Gbajumo*. Following the festival, the king invited Ayomide to live permanently in his palace; he also hired her as his personal entertainer and lavishly rewarded her and her family.

Musical Elements

The *oriki* is recited using heightened speech technique. It starts with a four-measure introduction played by the *sèkèrè* and the *agogo*. The *Akuba* comes in on m. 5. The temple blocks join in on m.6 with the same rhythm as the *akuba* and the *iyá ilù* does the same on m.7. This pattern continues till m.12 and is to be repeated as many times as required to recite the *oriki*. mm.5-12 repeated once or twice before the voice joins in. After the recitation of the *oriki*, the percussion ensemble plays a postlude starting from m.13 to the end of the music.

Eru Oba starts with a seven-measure interlude with solo trumpet that ushers the chorus in unison on m.8. The chorus splits into a two-part call and response from m.16. On m.20, the soprano soloist comes in with a high solo melody arching above the chorus. The music ends with solo calling on “*Oba Alafon?*” (King of Afonni town). The scene concludes with Ayomide singing the solo with the chorus on the last piece *Gbajumo* which is written in the highlife style. The entire cast joins Ayomide to commemorate the festival and celebrates the happiness of their king. The music starts with a three-measure introduction showcasing the trumpet solo. The chorus joins in on m.4 singing solfege (as shown in Figure XVII) and joining the dancers on the market square.

The image shows a musical score for a choir. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the vocal line and a bass clef staff for the accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The score begins with a three-measure introduction. The vocal line starts with the lyrics "La la la ti do la soh la fa mi re, La la la ti doh". There is a dynamic marking 'f' (forte) in the bass staff. The word "Choir" is written to the left of the vocal staff. An "Intro" box is placed above the first measure of the vocal line.

Figure XVII: *Gbajumo* with chorus
Ayodamope Oluranti, *Omo Àgbè Tó D'olórin*, Page 96, m. 18-20 “*Gbajumo*”.

The soprano solo comes in with the chorus on m.17. The chorus responds to the soprano solo on m.25. On m.35, the soprano solo comes in with the first verse and once again

the chorus responds to the solo. On m.43, the solo starts the second verse which ushers in the choir on m.51. The choir sings the chorus *Gbajumo* and the soprano solo sings a descant above the chorus and brings the opera to an end.

Conclusion: Decolonized opera as inclusive opera

For opera to be properly decolonized and inclusive, one basic yet important thing to do is to allow openness for inclusion. As simple as that sounds, one major problem in opera is that people in opera lack an openness to explore new composers, new cultures and new trends in opera. “They are open to it when it 'seems' to be more inclusive. So, you have more companies who are a bit more inclusive these days by hiring black administrators, black artistic directors etc. They are all trying to do something to 'seem' more inclusive, but the operas are still the same.” says Dr. Tiffany Jackson. Though hiring people of color might be a good way to start, it should not end there. Hiring a person of color without making deliberate efforts to explore new and inclusive repertoire and allowing the cast and crew to showcase inclusivity and diversity is tokenism. To achieve a decolonized and richer opera, we must vandalize the backbone of tokenism.

Travis Stimeling and Kayla Tozar’s article on “Narratives of Musical Resilience and the Perpetuation of Whiteness in the Music History Classroom” states

Even in classrooms in which students of color outnumber white students, our textbooks overwhelmingly feature the creative work of European and European American men. After at least three decades of advocacy for more inclusive textbooks and teaching materials, textbook authors occasionally attempt to remedy these biases by including a person of color (POC).⁸⁰

Another tokenistic approach that we see today is various opera directors remounting older works and incorporating "new trends" or "diversity." Pretty Yende, a South African soprano, speaks a line in Zulu during a recent Metropolitan Opera staging of *la fille du régiment*. Taking these shortcut approaches to include diversity in opera are tokenistic approaches that should

⁸⁰ Travis Stimeling and Kayla Tozar. “Narratives of Musical Resilience and the Perpetuation of Whiteness in the Music History Classroom | Journal of Music History Pedagogy.” Accessed January 23, 2022. <http://www.ams-net.org/ojs/index.php/jmhp/article/view/312>.

be vandalized and not encouraged. Rather than adding a line of Zulu language to a traditionally European opera, a decolonized strategy would be to perform an entire Zulu opera like *Madiba* by Sibusiso Njeza at the MET featuring the prestigious South African soprano.

Another strategy for decolonizing and enriching opera is to deconstruct the canons. Canonization is a major issue in the world of classical music as a whole. For so long, these canons were referred to as operatic standards determining what should be performed or not. In essence, these standards have created obstacles and impediments to the evolution of new standards and new works. In the past, old operas were written as a result of these composers being commissioned and contracted to create new works for certain audiences and situations. Though new operas are still being produced today, these operas are performed seldom and quickly become extinct, while the older canonical works resurface.

The music history classroom has a whiteness problem. Situated in departments and schools of music that have been designed to preserve, promote, and replicate the musical traditions of western Europe, the music history classroom is often deeply implicated in a project that centers whiteness and that celebrates proximity to whiteness as an admirable goal for persons of color.”⁸¹

To add to Travis Stimeling and Kayla Tozar's assertions, opera has a whiteness problem. Most music schools, opera houses, summer programs, and workshops have developed programs that have resulted in preserving, promoting, and reproducing Western European musical traditions. The works of deceased white males are frequently celebrated and performed. Though opera is inextricably linked to European culture and cannot be disregarded or overlooked, the genre has spread around the world, and for a long time, new operatic cultures have been underestimated and dismissed as primitive or unworthy of 'operatic standards'. Another reason for these other cultures' absence from opera is ignorance. Because

⁸¹ Travis Stimeling and Kayla Tozar

opera has been trapped in the box of Europeanism and has been largely perceived as white, many opera professionals are unaware of these emerging cultures and their inventive operatic traditions rooted in their culture.

If an operatic version of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" were to be created.

It would proceed as follows:

I have a dream that one day BIPOC individuals would perform on several stages without being judged because of their "accent" or their heritage or origin in other "minority cultures".

I have a dream that opera will not only be sung in European languages or in English but also in several languages of the world. Opera performed on main stages of the world like the MET, La Scala, Royal Opera house, Prague State Opera, Sydney Opera House, Teatro di San Carlo, Paris Opera, etc. will showcase several cultures, languages and composed works.

I have a dream that racism and segregation in opera will be no more, and BIPOC will not be treated like second class citizens in the field. That institutions in opera will be created to address issues in racism in opera, and BIPOC will have a platform to thrive and not strive.

I have a dream that new paradigms and canons will be established in opera. Canons of diversity, inclusivity and equity will be established in opera.

I have a dream that colonialism, primitivism, exoticism, and classism will be in the past. This "isms" will be addressed in classrooms and students will be sensitive and aware of how these have affected opera and the changes that have been made to cause a change.

The Farmer's Son Becomes a Hunter Initial Anonymous Folktale

The initial folktale of the Farmer's son becomes a hunter can be accessed this this link. [click here](#).⁸²

Rewritten Folk Tale and Yoruba Translation

Ayomide was the daughter of a farmer and his wife. They were not wealthy, but they never went hungry. They always managed to grow enough food to feed their small family with little left over to trade, regardless of how bad times got.

Ayomide's parents anticipated the day when she would join them in their farming endeavors. They could increase their farm's output and, more importantly, Ayomide could learn to fend for herself in the same way her parents had done before her. However, much to her parents' dismay, Ayomide declared her desire to be a musician. Her father exclaimed, "A musician!" A musician's life is unpredictable; one day, you might find gigs, and the next, you might not, he added. Ayomide's mother continued, "It's risky because you never know what you're going to get or if you're going to get hired," but Ayomide's heart was set on being a musician, and she expressed her feelings to her parents. She believed she would be more content as a musician than a farmer. Even though her parents were dissatisfied with her choice, they decided to support her in any way they could, including helping her pay for her application and acceptance fees to a nearby university.

As a result, Ayomide developed into a skilled and successful musician. She was frequently hired to sing at neighborhood events. Until one day when it appeared as though her luck had run out. Her vocal prowess appeared to be in vain, as their small town had run

⁸² "The Farmers Son Becomes a Hunter," AllFolkTales.Com, accessed May 16, 2020. http://www.allfolktales.com/wafrika/farmers_son_becomes_hunter.php.

out of gigs. She spent days wandering the city, visiting her neighbors to remind them that she was still alive and available to sing at their events. On her way home one day, she noticed a bird in a cage that had been left on a bench while its owner conversed with a friend. She was so exhausted from walking that she sat on the same bench. As soon as she sat, she heard the bird sing.

Tin tin jantó

To wi pe maa se rere, mo gbé ye kékeré (I hear the bird saying I will make it)

Tin tin to jantó

The bird sang exquisitely. Ayomide had never heard such lovely music in her entire life, and she felt confident that everything would be fine. She continued her journey home, her heart overflowing with joy. She had no idea what would happen next or how it would happen, but she was convinced that her life was about to change forever.

When Ayomide returned home, she immediately wrote down the song she had heard the bird sing and transformed it into such a beautiful song that everyone who heard her sing danced and invited her to sing it again.

Tin tin to jantó

To wi pe maa se rere, mo gbé ye kékeré

Tin tin to jantó

Indeed, Ayomide's father and mother had never heard such beautiful music before, and they burst into song. They danced and danced some more. When Ayomide's father regained his breath, an idea occurred to him. For several years, their village's king had been depressed. The best poets, musicians, dancers, and jesters from distant villages had come to console him, but to no avail. Perhaps this song will do the trick and bring a smile to their king's face.

Thus, Ayomide and her father set out for the palace. When they arrived at the palace, they were stopped at the gate by the guards. "What are you doing here?" "They

inquired." "May we see the king?" The farmer returned the compliment. "Is the king expecting you?" inquired the guards. "The farmer responded," "Certainly not, but?" "Then you will not be able to see him," the guards interjected. The farmer pleaded, but one of the guards said, "If I were you, I would flee because the king is in a foul mood, and you do not wish to risk his wrath." The farmer began to reverse his course, but Ayomide burst into song and the guards began to dance.

Ayomide and her father entered the palace and discovered the king on his throne, scowling. Who let you in here?? screamed the king. "I am here to sing for you, your highness," Ayomide stated." She began by singing praises to the king and then launched into the bird-inspired song.

Tin tin to jantó
 To wi pe maa se rere, mo gbé ye kékeré
 Tin tin to jantó

The king rose to his feet and began dancing. Everyone in attendance immediately began to dance. The king's wives emerged from their rooms to see what was happening, and they immediately began dancing. The princes and princesses all began dancing. The palace's mood, which had been solemn for years, was miraculously lifted. Everyone danced until they were exhausted and unable to continue.

The sun was about to set, and Ayomide and her father desired to return home, but the king refused. As a result, he hired her as his personal musician and director of the palace's musical activities. Additionally, he offered her half of his possessions and a room in his quarters. That is how the farmer, and his wife became wealthy, through their daughter Ayomide the musician.

Yoruba translation of folktale by Dr. Daniel Kolawole Olukoya

Ọmọ Àgbẹ̀ Tó D'olórin

Àgbẹ̀ kan pèlù iyawo rẹ̀ ni òmòbìnrin kàn tí oruko rẹ̀ n'jé Ayomide. Won kò jé òlólá àmò èbì o pà won ri bó tì wú ki asiko kan búrú tó. Won ti màà n'ri òunjẹ kà lati fi bò idile wòn pelu diè toku ti won fi sori igbà lati ma tàà.

Awon obi Ayomide ti n'rétí òjọ kan ti o ma dàràpòmò won ninu isé ókó ti won n'se. Ti ówó bá ti po, ohun ti won n'ri lori ile nà túbò mà po si. Ó tu wá jé n'kan pàtàki fun Ayomide nitoripe, á lè kò lati bò àrà rẹ̀ bi awon òbi rẹ̀ sè bò àrà won ni sòju rẹ̀. Amò sá, ti iyalenu awon obi rẹ̀, Ayomide sò ikilò fun won wipe Isé órin ló yàn làyò. Ólórin? Ni baba re bà lànu. Igbesi àyẹ awon ólórin ni awon iwa àiròtélé, ni ójọ kan o ma ni awon éré ati fun ójọ miran, ó lè má ri nkánkán. Iya Ayomide sòrò wipe òhun kàn yèn léwu. È ko ni mò òhun to má ri gbà ati igbà ti wòn ma pè fun isé. Amò òkàn Ayomide ti sètò lókàn rẹ̀ wipe ólórin lo ma je, o ti wi fun òbi rẹ̀ bi o se ri lókàn rẹ̀. Ó rò wipe inu rẹ̀ yóó dun nibi ise orin ju ise agbẹ̀ lò. Bi o tiè jé wipe inu o Òbi rẹ̀ kò dun ti ipinnú rẹ̀, wón si tiléhin ni gbógbó ónà ti wón lé rànlowó. Wón bá sán gbógbó ówó ilé iwè gígá tò wà Ni agbẹ̀gẹ̀ rẹ̀.

Bí Ayomide sé di ólórin niyen. Ó mò órin kó, ó tì sàsáyórí. Ó gbà isé làti kórin ni ináwó ni agbẹ̀gẹ̀ rẹ̀ ni èkánkán. Àmò ni ójọ kan ló fé dabi wipe óríré rẹ̀ ti kuro lòdò rẹ̀, ni gbógbó bi o sè mò órin kó kò fé wúlò fun mó nitori pe ófé dàbì wipe kò ri isé órin gbà mò ninu ilu kékéré tó wà. Ó ti rin kiri ninu ilù ni gbogbo igbà kán. Ó tii ló bá awon tó wà làdúgbò rẹ̀ wipe oún tii wa làdúgbò lati kórin fún gbogbo ináwó ti wón bá fé sè. Ni ójọ kan lò bà n'pàdà bò silé ló ri èyè kan ninu àhámó rẹ̀ ti o wà lóri ijòkò éni tó ni tó n'ba òrè rẹ̀ soro. Ó ti rẹ̀ lati mà dánikán rin, ló bá ni kó jòkò sori àgá ibi ti èyè náá wà. Bi o sé jòkò lo gbó bi èyè nàà sé n'kórin.

Tín tín tó Ján tó

Mo gbé yé kékéré to wipe màà serere

Tín tín tó ján tó

Èyè naa si korin daradara. Ayomide o ti gbo iru orin to rèwa to yi ni igbesi aye rè ri, o ti gba mòrà wipe gbogbo ohún nkán yóó dàrà. O ti rin irin ajo rè lò si ilé rè pèlu àyò ninu òkàn rè. Ko mó ohun to dájú tó fé sèlè abi bi óhún kàn sè fé sèlè amo o mó dájú wipe àyé rè yóó yípàdà. Nigbati Ayomide dé ilé rè, o kò órin ti èyè yèn kò, ó wá sò di orin tó rèwà sèti éni tó gbá gbó lati jó sì ati lati tùn pè wipe kó wá kó órin yén lèèkàn si.

Tín tín tó Ján tó

Mo gbè yè kékéré tó wipe màà serere

Tín tín tó Ján tó

Nitòótó ni awon òbì Ayomide ò gbó irù órin tó réwà yì, won si mú jójó. Won jó, won tubò jó sí dáádáá. Ni igbàti òkàn Baba Ayomide ti bàlè. Ni won bá ní irònu kan. Òbà àbúlé won ni òkàn rè sì dàrù fún ódún tó ti pé. Èlèwì to dára jù, ólórín, óníjó ati awon àlávání tí wá lati ibi to jinnà ti àbúlé lati wá dáwón láráyá àmò won kò rísé. Bóyá órin yì yóó mú won, ó ti mà mú òbà rèrìn.

Ni won bá gbá ònà àfin ló, Ayomide pelu baba rè bá lò. Ni igbati won dé àfin, awon òlùsò ti dáwóndúró lènu ònà. Kini è wá sè nibiyi? Bí won sè bèrè niyèn. A fèràn lati ri òbà? Ni àgbè ná dáhùn. Sé òba n'rèti yin, ni Àgbè bá dáhùn wipe rára àmò??? Nitorina, è kò lè ri won, èti sí awon òlùsò òbá wi fun Àgbè niyèn. Ni Àgbè bá bèbè àmò nkan ninu awon òlùsò òbà sò fun wipe "bi mó ba jé iwò ní, màà mà lo nitoriwipe inú òbà nàà kò dún, sùgbòn iwò ko ni fé rí ibinu oba. Ni àgbé bá yipada, àmò Ayomide bá bèrè si nkòrin ni gbogbo awon òlùsò òbà bá bèrè si n'jó.

Ayomide pelu baba rè bá lò sinu ààfin ni ibi ti won ti bà òbà to n'binú to n'ru lori itè rè. Tá lo jé kè wólé tò mi wá ni òbá bá kígbé. Ayomide dahun, o wipe, "mò wa lati kórin fún yín, kábiyèsì"

Ó kókó kí òbà kó tó wá kó órin ti èyè ti kò.

Tín tín tó Ján tó

Mo gbé yè kékéré to wipe màà se rere

Tín tín tó Ján tó

Òbà nà bá didé, lò bá mùjójó. Awon ti won wa ninu ààfin ná bèrè tin jó. Ni awon àyà òbà jàdè wá láti inu yàrà won lati wò kàn to n'sèlè ni won ba n'jo. Gbogbo omo òbà lokunrin, lobinrin bèrè ti n'jó. Ààfin to ti wà ninu ipò ibanuje lati òpòlòpò odun sèhin ló yípàdà pelu iyànù. Gbogbo won bá jó tí tí o mà fi rè wòn ti wòn ko ni lè jó mó.

Òòrùn kò ni pé wò ni Ayomide pèlu baba rè bá fé pàdà ló sí ilé wón. Àmò Óbà kò fé kí Ayomide lò, lò bà gbà sisé gègè bi Ólórín won ati ólórí gbogbo awon tó nikàn se pèlù orin ninu àfin. Ó ti bù òlá rè fun ni ilàdi Òlá rè. o ti fùn ni ibi kàn ti yòò mà gbé ninu ilé rè. Bi àgbè àti iyawo rè lati àrà Ayomide Ólórín di òlòlá

Opera Dialogue

Scene 1

Narrator: Come one, come all, gather 'round for it is time to tell the tale of the great Ayomide! Listen closely as I bring you on this journey, for our story begins in the village of Oladuro with the Oluwaseyi family. Ayomide's father, Adebayo, wants nothing more than for his daughter to live a good life and be happy, but tradition teaches him there is only one way. However, she has other plans, as we center in on our hero and her humble beginning.

Stage lights on with Ayomide on stage with her headphones beside her is a bag of farm tools

From backstage

Mr. Oluwaseyi: Ayo!!! Ayo!!!! Ayomide!!! Ayomide Oluwaseyi!!! Are you wearing those headphones again? (*Opens the door*).

Ayomide: (*quickly stands and picks up the bag with tools and also takes off headphones*). No No No sir! (*trembling*) I'm sorry Dad. I was just listening to the song Deji wants us to record tomorrow in his studio. (*Waits and scratches hair*) While I was shopping of course.

Mr. Oluwaseyi: You're recording tomorrow? Ayo, you can't go tomorrow. The festival still has a few days left, and we're going to experience it all as a family.

Ayomide: But!

Mr. Oluwaseyi: Don't but me! (*Raises voice*) (*takes a breath and calms down. He moves closer to Ayo*) I know that you love music, but you cannot make a living as a musician in Oladuro, if you could I would support you wholeheartedly. I have raised you to be a strong and beautiful woman, so that you can support your mother and I and one day a family of your own; no man wants to marry a woman who can't support him and his children. I love you and I know how talented you are, but I would not be doing my duty as a father if I didn't provide for your future, yes? Now, grab your stuff before your mother gets here.

(Mrs Oluwaseyi comes in)

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: What is going on here? We don't have time for gallivanting. We still have some cocoyam to harvest, and I want to be back here before the festivities start!

Ayomide: Actually Mum, I can't.

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: You can't what? What are you doing that you can't help your father and I?

Ayomide: I have a meeting... (*Ayomide pulls out a letter from her Pocket*) I wanted to wait until after to show you, but I might as well just give it to you now. Please don't kill me.

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: What is it? Are you pregnant? I can see the bump already. You spoiled child; you have killed me!

Ayomide: Eeewww!! Mum!! No!! Why would you even think that?

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: You better not be! Where is my koboko oo!! (*She yells*)

Ayomide: W-w-w-w-wai-wai-wait, I'm not pregnant! (*Lifting her hands up*) Read the letter first (*hands over letter to parents, speaks as they read the letter*) I got accepted into the local university, they're going to pay for the whole thing.

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: This is unbelievable! Congratulations! I knew you weren't pregnant. Praise Jesus!

Mr. Oluwaseyi: I thank God for blessing me with such an amazing daughter! I was nervous we wouldn't have the money but look at you. You are such a smart girl.

(They both hug her)

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: So, what are you planning to study? Miss I-got-a-full-ride-scholarship

Ayomide: (hesitates) Eeemm! Hmmm!! (Scratches head) Mu... Music

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: What???? Are. are you. Are you alright? Music, you want to study music? Who does that? Did we not raise you right? Why would you ever waste your time studying music?

(Everyone pauses to look at her. She takes a deep breath)

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: Ok I'm sorry! *(She moves closer to Ayo)* I know how talented you are, I just didn't know how serious you were about studying music. There's not a lot of money in it here, *(to Adebayo)* you told her that right?

Mr. Oluwaseyi: Ayo, we already discussed that you would study Agricultural science so that you can help us.

Ayomide: I know Dad, but I just couldn't do it. I love music and I believe I can make it big so I can support you, I just need you to support me. I know how risky it is, but my heart cries to be a musician; I'll make you both proud, I promise.

Mr. Oluwaseyi: A musician's life is unpredictable, one day you find gigs and for many more, you may find nothing.

Mrs. Oluwaseyi: It's risky, you never know what you will get or if you will be hired. But if that's what you want, we will support you. Abi?

Mr. Oluwaseyi: Yes, we know you'll make us proud. Tonight, we celebrate! But for now, there's work to do. I have a child going to college!

(Mr. and Mrs. Oluwaseyi start to exit)

Ayomide: Does this mean I can go to Deji's to record tomorrow?

Mr. and Mrs. Oluwaseyi: No!

Ayomide: Na wa ooo!

(Ayomide sighs and follows them offstage)

Narrator: So Ayomide left for school to become a musician, where she not only loved her studies but excelled at them too! She became so talented the village would hire her to come back for every event, festival, and holiday to perform. Those nights, her voice would carry over the village, blanketing it with beauty and serenity.

Scene 2

Narrator: Ayomide's story was just beginning, as she graduated from university at the top of her class! But the reality of the world was far different than her days as a mere student. While her talent was plentiful, the people of Oladuro did not have enough for her to make a living. The celebrations became less and less frequent, until Ayomide could barely make ends meet. Frustrated and broke, she tiredly sat on a bench in the market square, alone except for a tiny bird sitting in its cage, eyeing her with curiosity.

Lines in Ki lon sele

Villager 1: Loud laughter (*mocking Ayomide*)

Villager 2: We told her, but she won't listen

Villager 3: Look at her now

Narrator: Ayomide had never heard such beautiful music in her entire life, and she was encouraged that all would be well. She continued her journey home with so much joy in her heart. She didn't know for sure what was going to happen next or how it was going to happen, but she was convinced that her life was about to change.

When Ayomide got home, she immediately wrote down the song she heard the bird sing and made it into a very beautiful song that everyone who heard her sing would dance and invite her to sing it again.

Scene 3/Finale

Narrator: Ayomide's father and mother had indeed never heard such beautiful music and they broke out into a dance. They danced and danced and then danced some more. When Ayomide's father got his breath back, he had an idea. The king of their village had been in a depressed state for several years. The best poets, musicians, dancers and jesters had come from far away villages to cheer him up but to no avail. Maybe this song would do the trick and make their king smile. So, off to the palace, Ayomide and her father set off. When they got to the palace, the guards stopped them at the gate.

Guard: What is your business here?

Mr. Oluwaseyi: We would like to see the king?

Guard: Is the king expecting you?

Mr. Oluwaseyi: No, but?

Guard: Then you cannot see him. (*The guards interrupted*).

Mr. Oluwaseyi and Ayomide: Please!

Guard: If I were you, I would go away because the king is in a foul mood, and you do not want to risk his anger.

Reconsiders

Guard: I will let you into the palace because I think the king will love your song. But if he ends up not liking it, I don't know you oh! And I did not let you in. You sneaked in by yourself. (*He said this holding out his eyes*)

Oba: Who let you in here?

Ayomide: I am here to sing for you, your highness. (*Bowing down with her father*)

She first sang praises to the king and then busted into the song inspired by the bird.

Narrator: The sun would soon set and Ayomide and her father wanted to go back home. But the king did not want Ayomide to leave. So, he hired her as his personal musician and the head of all the musical activities in the palace. He also offered her half of his possessions

and gave her a place to stay in his quarters. And that was how the farmer and his wife, through their daughter Ayomide the musician, became rich.

Music Lyrics and Translations

<p>Asuramu ko te boro boro</p> <p>Asuramu ko te boro boro Alagbede to nlu irin loju kan, o lohun to fe fayo nbe Ogede gede wo oja, o wo ja eye kiye kaa dun</p> <p>Akoko nsu re, tete tete Ewe fi awo jo ara, sugbon won o fi oju jo ara won Labalaba fe sebi iye, sugbon ko le sise iye Duro otitọ si ara rẹ, lafiwe pa</p> <p>Ki lo n'sèlè Ki lo n'sèlè ninu áyé mi? Gbogbo n'kan ti n'lo daadaa, àmò lojiji, nkan d'oju ru</p> <p>Se n'kan se mi ni? Se n'kan asise nbe ninu òhun mi? Bawo ni mo se fe pada lo si Ile Igbekele awon obi mi lori mi tii ja s'asan, pabo lo jasi Bawo ni mo se fe pada lo si ile</p> <p>Bawo? Bawo? Bawo? Ki lo n'sèlè ninu áyé mi?</p> <p>Aria ti sòrò / Nibo ni kin ti bèrè Nibo mi kin ti bèrè Ki ni kin se? O wùn mi kin yi òwò agò pada séyin , kin gbó Ohun ti awon obi mi so fun mi Gbogbo eniyan kilò fun mi Mò ní agidi, mi ò gbò Iya mi sò òdòdò òrò fun mi</p>	<p>The diligent does not easily fall into disgrace</p> <p>The diligent does not easily fall into disgrace A blacksmith who kept hitting an iron at a single spot has his reason, The phoenix is the most beautiful of all birds All other birds fall to the whims and caprices of the phoenix Time is moving fast, do it now Leaves share the same color, but they don't look alike The butterfly wants to act like a bird but cannot be one Stay true to yourself, comparison kills</p> <p>What is going on What is going on in my life? It was all going well, All of a sudden everything took a turn for the worse. Is there something wrong with me? Is there something wrong with my voice? How do I go home just like this? My parents unfailing trust in me has come to nothing! How do I go home and tell them that it's all over? How? How? How did this happen? What is going on in my life?</p> <p>Lament Aria / Where do I start from? Where do I start from? What do I do? How I wish I could turn back the hand of time and just listen to my parents Everyone warned me I was too adamant to even listen My Mum told be the truth</p>
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<p>Èrù tii bà baba mi nitori mi Bó tiè jè wipé awon òrè mi dájú, won wi ire</p> <p>Mò ti gbèra, mo ti se ohun ti mò fé sè È wò mi bayii, òlòshi ti ko làpònlé Olorun jowo ran mi lówó Gbà mi kuro ninu idòti yi ti mo ti bà àrà mi.....</p> <p>Nibo ni imòlè wà nidi ééfin Se èkún yii yóó dàwòdùró? Olorun, nibo lo wà? Mo nilo rè bayii ju ti sèlè lò Abi kin gba kádàrà ki temi gbé titi lai</p> <p>Nibò ni kin ti bèrè</p> <p>Tín tin to jan to Tín tin to jan to Mo gbé ye kékéré to wipe màà serere Mo je ni igbagbo Mo nigbagbo ninu ko séésé Àmi lo jé, ohun ti mo nilo niyen Akókò mi ti de lati boti ta, kin duro nigbórà O gbódó jé éni to dárá julo Na eni to dárá julo ko je eni to dárá julo Kò sò óhún to le dami duro afi émi Gbòn sita! Ayo, ni igbòyà! Ko si eni to so wipe o rorun Ko si ohun to da to ròrùn lati wá Gbogbo awon onihúmò to dárá julo ati awon to se aseyori lo ni ohun to dáváon pada sèhin Amò won bórí rè, won tii jade nigbòrá ati ni dáádáá Nigbakugba ti nba ti sùbú, nitoriwipe emi yoo ranti ohun ti èyè kékéré yii ko mi Tín tin to janto màà sèrèrèè</p> <p>Orin awon to n sise Ọba Aláfòní, o ade o</p>	<p>My Dad was scared for me Even though my friends seemed mean, they meant well But I went on to do what I wanted Now look at me, a worthless wretch God please help me Save me from this mess I have found myself</p> <p>Where is the light at the end of this tunnel? Will this weeping ever stop? Where are you God? I need you now more than ever Or I will accept my fate and be doomed forever. Where do I start from?</p> <p>Tín tin to jan to Tín tin tó Ján tó I hear the bird say I will succeed And I believe I believe in the impossible This is a sign and all I really needed This is my time to go out there and stay strong Dare to be the best Beat the best and be the best Nothing is stopping me but myself Shake it off! Ayo be brave! No one said it would be easy Nothing good comes easy All the best inventors and achievers in the world had setbacks But they overcame and came out stronger and better So whenever I fall again, because I will I will remember what this little bird taught me Tín tin tó Ján tó I will succeed</p> <p>Song of the maids King Aláfòní, great crown</p>
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<p>Ọkan ọso Ọjànàkú Ounje re la mu wa o</p> <p>Eru Oba Eru Oba ni mo ba oba to Ọba Aláfòní</p> <p>Oriki Gbéra nílẹ̀ o dide Ọba Aláfòní oooo Gbéra nílẹ̀ o dide Mo yíka ọ̀tún, Mo yíka ọ̀sì fún orí Adé, Ọmọ Akin ọ̀ gbọ̀dọ̀ ọ̀jojo Ọmọ afidí pòtẹ̀mọ̀lẹ̀ Ọmọ Akin tọ̀bí nílẹ̀ Akin, Ọmọ Abólómọ̀ jà bí ọ̀ pọ̀mọ̀ rẹ̀ Èrùjẹ̀jẹ̀ agboko gbààlà Ọkan ọso Ọjànàkú tí nì mi gbó kiji kiji Ìlú fẹ̀mi lóyẹ̀ ọ̀kọ̀ ilú Ọmọ ẹ̀yẹ̀kẹ̀yẹ̀ tí nì dún nínú igbó tẹ̀yẹ̀kẹ̀yẹ̀ ò lẹ̀ ẹ̀ fọ̀hùn. Ogun ọ̀ jà jà kó kó àwọ̀n baba yín lẹ̀rú rí, Şèbí o ba lórí ohun gbogbo, O lágbara lórí Ọ̀kùnrin ilú, Obìnrin ilú, Ọmọ̀dé ilú, Àgbà ilú, olówó ilú, ọ̀lálá ilú. Àti ikọ̀lẹ̀ Ọ̀run ni àwọ̀n babańlá yín tí nì gbé Adé bọ̀ wa ilé ayé Ọba Aláfòní ooo Gbéra nílẹ̀ o dide.</p> <p>Gbajumo ki i wa nnkan ti</p> <p>Gbajumo ki i wa nnkan ti Iberu ejo, ki i je ka te omo ejo mole Gbolohun oro kan, a maa yi ipinnu ogun odun pada Ibi ti a nlo la nwo, a ki i wo ibi ti a ti subu Ibaje eniyan, kole da ise Oluwa duro</p>	<p>The only bird that whistle in the forest We have brought you your food</p> <p>Eru Oba We honor the king, the great one King Aláfòní</p> <p>Oriki King of Aláfòní Wake up and stand up I bow for the king The strong one must not be afraid, The that put conquer bad characters A strong child that was born in a strong home The one that take over the world, The powerful one that shake off the forest. The one people love, The only bird that whistle in the forest when no bird can't whistle, The one that gives command and no one rejects No war has ever conquered your forefathers, You have power over the youngs, the olds, the rich, the poor. Your forefathers are blessed with the crown of king for the heaven, King of Aláfòní Wake up and stand up</p> <p>A famous person does not seek and not find A famous person does not seek and not find The fear of snakes won't let anyone dare trample on even a baby snake A single statement can very well turn-around a twenty years old decision We focus on where we are going, not where we had fallen The wickedness of man cannot stop the work of God</p>
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IPA for Yoruba

Opening Oríki

{ajòmídé o!}

Ayòmídé o!

Ayomide o!

{omɔ olúwafèjí o!}

Omɔ Olúwafèyí!

The daughter of Oluwaseyi!

{lùlù fū wɔn!}

Lùlù fún wɔn!

Play the drums for them!

{kɔrĩ fūwɔn!}

Kɔrin fún wɔn!

Sing for them!

{kí wɔn gbà kǎpé bàbá rɛ ló l'orí!}

Kí wɔn gbà pé bàbá rɛ ló l'orin!

Prove to them that you are a descendant of music!

{àwa l'agbà}

Àwa l'agba

We are the elders

{adijè fūfū l'agbà adijè}

Adijè funfun l'agbà adijè

The white chicken is superior to the chicken

Aria

Asuramu

{asúramú kò té bòbò bòbò}

Asúramú kò té bọrọ bọbọ

The diligent does not easily fall into disgrace

{alágḃèḃe tò n lu irĩ lódḃũ kã, ó lohũ tò fé fàḃò ní bè}
 Alágḃèḃe tò n lu irin lójú kan, ó lohun tò fé fàḃò ní bè
 A blacksmith who kept hitting an iron at a single spot has his reason

{akókò kò dúró de enìkã}
 Àkókò kò dúró de enìkan
 Time waits for no one

{ewé fi àwò dḃḃ ara, ðḃḃḃ wḃ ò fi odḃũ dḃḃ ara wḃ}
 Ewé fi àwò ḃḃ ara, ðḃḃḃ wḃ ò fi ojú ḃḃ ara wḃ
 Leaves share the same color, but they don't look alike

{dúró òtító sí ara re, àfiwé lè pa ni}
 Dúró òtító sí ara re, àfiwé lè pa ni
 Stay true to yourself, comparison kills

Recitative

Kí ló n ḃelè nínú ayé mi?

{kí ló n ḃelè nínú ayé mi?}
 Kí ló n ḃelè nínú ayé mi?
 What is going on in my life?

{gḃogḃò nkã tí n lo dáadáa, àmó lódḃidḃi kò sí eni tò fé mi}
 Gbogbo nkan tí n lo dáadáa, àmó lójiji kò sí eni tò fé mi
 It was going well, but suddenly no one wanted me

{ḃé nkã ḃe mí ni?}
 ḃé nkan ḃe mí ni?
 Is there something wrong with me?

{ḃé nkã àḃiḃe n be nínú ohũ mi?}
 ḃé nkan àḃiḃe n be nínú ohùn mi?
 Is there something wrong with my voice?

{àbí wḃ kò féra mi mó rárá ni?}
 Àbí won kò féraḃ mi mó rárá ni?
 Maybe they don't like me anymore?

{àbí orí dṣṣé nkã ìgbà díè nínú ajé mi?}
 Àbí orin jé nkan ìgbà díè nínú ayé mi?
 Maybe music was meant to be for a season in my life?

{àwṣ òbí mi kilò fú mi}
 Àwọn òbí mi kilò fún mi
 My parents warned me

{àwṣ òrè mi kṗègà mi, wṣ ti sò fúmi wí kṗé ìronú agò ni}
 Àwọn òrè mi p'ègàn mi, wón ti sò fún mi wí pé ìronú agò ni
 My friends mocked me and told me it was a stupid idea

{báwo ni mo je ma ronú kṗé èjì kì í je tèmì}
 Báwo ni mo se ma ronú pé èyí kì í se tèmì
 Why did I ever think this was not meant for me

{ajò, jé o gò ni?}
 Ayò, sé o gò ni?
 Ayo, are you stupid?

{mo rò wí kṗé mo gbṣṣ tó láti jí ìkṗinu ajé mi kṗada}
 Mo rò wí pé mo gbón tó láti yí ìpinnu ayé mi pada
 I thought I was wise to make life changing decisions.

{àwṣ òbí mi ti ní ìgbékèlé nínú mi lóri ìkṗinu jii}
 Àwọn òbí mi ti ní ìgbékèlé nínú mi lóri ìpinnu yii
 My parents trusted me with this decision

{báwo ni mo je fé kṗada lo sí ilé láti sò fú wṣ wí kṗé ó ti kṗari}
 Báwo ni mo se fé pada lo sí ilé láti so fún wón wí pé ó ti pari
 How do I go home and tell them that it's all over

Aria Lament Aria

{níbo ni kí ti bèrè?}
 Níbo ni kín ti bèrè?
 Where do I start from?

{kí ni kí ʃe?}

Kí ni kí ʃe?

What do I do?

{ó wù mí kí jí ɔwó ago kpadà séjì, kí gbó ohũ tí àwḡ òbí mi sò fúú mi}

Ó wùn mí kí yí ɔwó ago padà séyìn, kí gbó ohun tí àwḡ òbí mi sò fún mi

How I wish I could turn back the hand of time, and just listen to my parents

{gbogbo ènijà kilò fúú mi}

Gbogbo èniyàn kilò fún mi

Everyone warned me

{mo ní agídí, mi ò gbó}

Mo ní agídí, mi ò gbó

I was too adamant to even listen

{ìjà mi sò òdodo òrò fú mi}

ìyá mi sò òdodo òrò fún mi

My mom told me the truth

{èrù tí í ba bàbá mi nítorí mi}

Èrù tí í ba bàbá mi nítorí mi

My Dad was scared for me

{bó tí è dḡé wí kpé àwḡ òré mi dádḡú, wḡ wí ire}

Bó tí è jé wí pé àwḡ òré mi dájú, wḡ wí ire

Though my friends seemed mean, they meant well

{mo ti gbéra, mo ti ʃe ohũ tí mo fé ʃe}

Mo ti gbéra, mo ti ʃe ohun tí mo fé ʃe

But I went on to do what i wanted

{ε wò mí bájií, olóḡi tí kò lákpòlé}

È wò mí bájií, olòḡi tí kò lápòlé

Now look at me, a worthless wretch

{olórũ dḡḡwó rà mí lówó}

Olórũ jòwó rà mí lówó

God, please help me

{gḃà mí kúro nínú idòtí jii tí mo ti bá ara mi}
 Gbà mí kúro nínú idòtí yii tí mo ti bá ara mi
 Save me from this mess I have found myself

{níbo ni ìmólè wa nídi èéfi?}
 Níbo ni ìmòlé wa nídi èéfin?
 Where is the light at the end of this tunnel?

{Jé ekú jii jóò dāwóduró?}
 Sé ekún yii yóò dāwóduró?
 Will this weeping ever stop?

{Olórũ, níbo lo wà?}
 Olórun, níbo lo wà?
 Where are you God?

{mo nílò re báyii dḗu tàtèji wá lo}
 Mo nílò re báyii ju tàtèyìn wá lo
 I need you now more than ever

{ábí kí gḃa kádàrá, kí tēmi gbé tíí láí}
 Àbí kí gba kádàrá, kí tēmi gbé tíí láí
 Or I will accept my fate and be doomed forever

{níbo ni kí ti bèrè?}
 Níbo ni kí ti bèrè?
 Where do I start from?

Aria

Tín tin to jan to

{tí tí tó dḗa tó}
 Tín tín tó ján tó

{mo gbó eye kékeré tó wí kpé màá ferere}
 Mo gbó eye kékeré tó wí pé màá serere
 I heard a bird say I will succeed

{mo ní ìgbàgbó}

Mo ní ìgbàgbó

And I believe

{mo ní ìgbàgbó ní nínú kò seése}

Mo ní ìgbàgbó ní nínú kò seése

I believe in the impossible

{àmì ló dṣẹ́, ohũ tí mo ní ló nìjẹ}

Àmì ló jẹ́, ohun tí mo ní ló nìyẹn

This is a sign and all I really needed

{àkókò mi ti dé láti bó sí ìta, kí dúró ní gboja}

Àkókò mi ti dé láti bó sí ìta, kí dúró ní gboya

This is my time to go out there and stay strong

{o gbòdò dṣẹ́ eni tó dára jùlò}

O gbòdò jẹ́ eni tó dára jùlò

You must be the best

{na eni tó dára jùlò ko sì dṣẹ́ eni tó dára jùlò}

Na eni tó dára jùlò ko sì jẹ́ eni tó dára jùlò

Beat the best and be the best

{kò sí ohũ tó lè dámi dúró àfi èmi}

Kò sí ohun tó lè dámi dúró àfi èmi

Nothing is stopping me but myself

{gbónra nu! Ajò ní ìgboja}

Gbonra nu! Ayò ní ìgboya

Shake it off! Ayo be brave

{kò sí eni tó sò wí kṣé ó rorù}

Kò sí eni tó sò wí pé ó rorùn

No one said it would be easy

{kò sí ohũ tó dára tó wá ní ròrù}

Kò sí ohun tó dára tó wá níṣòrùn
Nothing good comes easy

{gḡogḡo àwḡ aláfowókḡawó tó dára dḡùlò àti àwḡ aláḡejḡrí ló ní idodḡúko}
Gbobó àwḡon aláfowópawó tó dára jùlò àti àwḡon aláḡeyḡrí ló ní idojúko
All the best investors and achievers in the world had setbacks

{ámó wḡ bori rḡ, ìkḡpadà wḡ sí lámìlaaka}
Àmó wḡon bori rḡ, ìpadà wḡon sí lámìlaaka
But they overcame and came out stronger and better

{nígḡàkugḡà tí n bá ti subú, nítorí wí kḡpḡ èmi jóò ráti ohũ tí ejḡ kékeré yí kó mi}
Nígḡàkugḡà tí n bá ti subú, nítorí wí pé èmi jóò rántí ohun tí ejḡ kékeré yí kó mi
So, whenever i fall again, because i will remember what this little bird taught me

{tí tí tó dḡá tó}
Tín tín tó ján tó

{mà á ḡe rere}
mà á se rere
I will succeed

Aria Gbajumo

{gḡadḡúmò kí ì wá nḡan tí}
Gbajúmò kí ì wá nḡan tí
A famous person does not seek and not found

{gḡólóhũ òrò kã, ó n jí ìkḡḡinu ogú òdú kḡpada}
Gbólóhùn òrò kan, ó n yí ìpinnu ogún òdún pada
A single statement can very well turn around twenty years decision

{ibi tí à n lḡ là n wò, a kí í wo ibi a ti subú}
Ibi tí à n lḡ là n wò, a kí í wo ibi a ti subú
We focus on where we are going, not where we have fallen

{ìbàdḡḡ ènìjã, kò lè dá ifḡ Olúwa dúro}
Ìbàjḡ ènìyàn, kò lè dá isḡ Olúwa dúro
The wickedness of man cannot stop the work of God

{ìbèrù edṣò, kì í jé ká tẹ ọmọ edṣò mólẹ}

Ìbèrù ejò, kì í jé ká tẹ ọmọ ejò mólẹ

The fear of snakes won't let anyone dare trample on even a baby snake

{tí ata bá rorò, ọmọ òlọta ní í kọ l'ógbṛṛ}

Tí ata bá rorò, ọmọ ọlọta ní í kọ l'ógbṛṛ

If the pepper is ferocious, the grinding stone will teach it a lesson

Ọba Aláfṛṛni

Ọba Aláfṛṛní

{ọba aláfṛṛni}

King of Afṛṛni town

gbára nílẹ̀ o dide ogun tó lọ

{gṫára nílẹ̀ o dide ogũ tó lọ}

rise up it time for war

mo yíkàá ọtún

{mo jíkàá ọtú}

I moved to the right

mo yíkàá ọ̀sì fún orí adé

{mo jíkàá ọ̀sì fú orí adé}

I moved to the left for the king

ọmọ Akin ọ̀ gbọdọ̀ sojo,

{ọmọ akĩ ọ̀ gbṫdṫ ṣodṣo,}

A brave one should not be scared,

ọmọ afídí p'òtẹ̀ mólẹ̀,

{ọmọ afídí kṫ'òtẹ̀ mólẹ̀,}

The one that over come conspiracy,

ọmọ Akin t'óbí nílẹ̀ Akin

{ọmọ akĩ t'óbí nílẹ̀ akĩ}

The brave one that was given birth to in a brave home.

omọ abólómọ já bí ò p'omọ rẹ
 {omọ abólómọ dṣà bí ò kṣ'omọ rẹ}
 The one that face war with bravery

Èrùjẹ̀jẹ̀ agboko gbààlà
 {èrudṣèdṣè agboko gbààlà}
 The one with supreme power

òkan soṣo àjànàkú tí n mi igbó kiji-kiji
 {òkã ṣṣò àdṣà̀nàkú tí n mi igbó kìdṣì-kìdṣì}
 The only mighty one that shake the forest

ìlú fẹmi lóyè oko ìlú
 {ìlú fẹmi lóyè oko ìlú}
 The one who everyone want

omọ eyekéyẹ tí n dún nínú igbó tẹyékéyẹ ò le è fọ̀nu
 {omọ eyekéyẹ tí n dú nínú igbó tẹyékéyẹ ò le è fọ̀nu}
 The one that gives command and no one rejects

ogun ò já já, kó kó àwọ̀n baba yín lérú
 {ogũ ò dṣà dṣà, kó kó àwṣ baba jì lérú}
 No war overcame your forefathers

sẹ̀bí o ba lóri ohun gbogbo
 {ṣẹ̀bí o ba lóri ohũ gbogbo}
 You are superior over everyone

o ba lóri okùnrin ìlú, obìnrin ìlú, omọ̀dé ìlú, àgbà ìlú, olówó ìlú, olólá ìlú,
 {o ba lóri okùrì ìlú, obìrì ìlú, omọ̀dé ìlú, àgbà ìlú, olówó ìlú, olólá ìlú,}
 You have power over men, women, young, old, rich and the wealthy

àti ikòlè òrun làwọ̀n baba yín, tí n gbádé bọ̀ wálé ayé
 {àti ikòlè òrũ làwṣ baba jì, tí n gbádé bọ̀ wálé ajé}
 Your forefathers brought the crown from heaven to the earth

Ọba Aláfọ̀nní oo

{oba aláfǎní oo}

King of Afonni town

gbára níè o dide ogun tó ló

{gḄára níè o dide ogũ tó ló}

rise up it time for war

Interview with Dr. Tiffany Jackson

Dr. Tiffany Jackson: Biographical Information

Dr. Tiffany Renée Jackson is a pioneering and internationally renowned classical and jazz singer, body builder, nutritionist, and educator. She was raised in New Haven, Connecticut, where she attended the Educational Center for the Arts and earned a Bachelor of Music from the University of Michigan, a Master of Music and Artist Diploma from Yale University, a Professional Studies Degree from the Manhattan School of Music, and a Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Connecticut. In the classical realm, she worked with orchestras and symphonies throughout the world as part of her Metropolitan Opera Study Grant, including Norway, Slovenia, and Germany. She has performed at prestigious festivals such as Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Aspen Music Festivals, as well as a number of the world's most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, where she made her debut in 2005. Dr. Jackson is well-known in the jazz world for her renditions of Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington's music. She has performed at the Blue Note and Dizzy's Club Coca Cola in New York City, as well as Jazz at Lincoln Center. Dr Jackson is currently employed by Western Carolina University as an Assistant Professor of Music (Voice). To learn more about Dr. Jackson, visit NecessaryDiva.net.

Questions and Answers

Me: What are some hurdles that you have had to go through as a Black opera singer?

TJ: One of the hurdles I have had to go through which is sort of the thesis of what we are talking about is I did not grow up being Europeanized, I grew up in the hood around Black people, Puerto Ricans, Jamaicans, Dominicans. I grew up in a very diverse neighborhood in New Haven, Connecticut. So, I had to in some ways learn to become a part of the opera

establishment and that was a major hoop that at the time, I didn't know I was doing. I grew up in the ghetto, so I had to learn to be a bit milder and assimilate and learn these languages and how to speak to them figuratively and literally. That was something that was not so eventful for me.

Me: Did you feel like you lost a part of yourself in that process?

TJ: I don't think I lost a part of myself. What I felt was that I had to redefine who I was to be able to thrive in different spaces. I didn't lose anything, if anything, I gained. In the game, I recognized "the game." It's like being in a familiar habitat and you have to learn how to survive it. I learned that the world is much bigger than the one I grew up in. I learned how talented I was. When you are in an environment when everyone looks like you, and sings like you, there's nothing spectacular there. Then I went out into the opera world and realized that there are categories and types, and I was able to determine; In this habitat, who am I? I was lucky because I had George Shirley as my voice teacher when I was 18 years old. Although I was singing in this new space, I had George Shirley and that helped me balance well.

Me: Have you faced any problems as a Black singer in opera?

TJ: Yes! I think so! I debuted the role of The Mother in Little Women by the new composer at that time named Mark Adamo and it was very successful. But when it became successful, I no longer played The Mother. They found a White woman to play The Mother because it was more believable for the four White girls who were sisters in this opera. I do remember thinking to myself, like, wow! I was fine when I brought this role to life but now that it's thriving, I no longer need to be a part of it. They never said that to me, but it was easy to see. However, if you were to see the score, you would see my name written on it as the person who debuted it and that's a beautiful thing. There were other subtle things that

happened alongside some micro-aggressions towards me, but this was the bigger and more direct thing that happened to me.

Me: What do you think is the reason why there are fewer Black people singing opera? Do you think it's because when people see Black people, they don't see opera?

TJ: Most Black people especially in the US who are singing opera all have a story. It's either a choir teacher or their band director or some old lady in their neighborhood (sometimes White but not always) who directed their choir. Kenneth Overton talks about how his teacher used to play Jessye Norman recordings and he attempted to go see her. At the concert, he sees this tall woman come out in a regal attire and starts singing and his life is changed forever. So that exposure is what inspires many Black people. We don't grow up to be opera singers. Some White people say my mum was an opera singer and my grandfather did so, so and so. We Black people don't really have that; we were exposed in a very exceptional way to our mentors and many of them were White. I went to Catholic school and that was how I was exposed to music outside my own. I had my first voice teacher who was this very slender White woman who was always drinking. She always smelled like wine, and I imitated her for 4-5 years. I didn't read music or do any training at all prior to having her as my teacher. It's the same for many Black people, we don't have the luxury of having a fancy voice teacher and that's why you won't find as many but there are more of us out there than you see. Some have elected not to go all the way to the top and just sing at local churches and communities. I don't think there are not a lot of Black singers out there because of race only, I think some just don't want life. It takes more than talent to be up there. For some people it makes them stronger when someone tells them they can't get up there, so they thrive even more.

Me: Is it fair to say that opera is racist?

TJ: I don't think the arts or opera is racist, I think people are. They lack imagination, they focus only on numbers and money and limited views about opera. Who is funding the opera? A lot of people probably know nothing about it. So those people tend to be narrower in their imagination. Some don't have a clue; they just look at number sheets and computation sheets and however that looks like it. The MET is doing *Porgy and Bess* again probably not because they love Black people but because the last time it was done, every show sold out.

Me: Since an all-Black cast opera sold out, why are people not thinking that if they do an African opera it will thrive?

TJ: They trust *Porgy and Bess* because of the historical proof and performance history of the opera. The music is loved everywhere, and people love seeing Black folks on stage doing what we do. They love it! But if you start to have too many Black people on stage all the time, you're going to get White people thinking that somebody is about to take something away from them.

Me: Why can't we have a world where there's a good balance between both? Why don't we infuse both on stage? So there's something for everyone

TJ: We have to do it ourselves and it's not easy. But we will have to have our own benefactors with lots of money to pull this stuff off. At the end of the day, it comes back to money. Sometimes it comes down to money and good reviews even before the race. It just tends to happen that most of the people that have the power are from the dominant culture. So, when it comes to the arts, it is mostly about numbers. However, there is completely no denying what role racism also has to play. Some Black folks bleach their skins and go through so much because they don't want the curse of Black or brown. Some go so deep that they just want to dissociate and don't want the stigma. I decided to form my life and

career based on what my destiny is and what God wanted for me. To answer your question, we have to do it ourselves. We can't wait for people to correct what they are benefiting from.

Me: People usually say that as a Black singer you have to work twice as hard to get what a White person gets. What do you think about that statement?

TJ: My mother used to tell me that same thing too and that's why I'm an overachiever. I also had to get healed from that because I needed to realize that I was doing what I was doing because I loved it and not because I was competing against anyone else whether White or Black. I only competed against myself, and I got work to do. Although it is true and one of the reasons is that we grew up in neighborhoods where we don't have the best schools and we were from poor homes. So, we put up the feeling that we are deserving of these things because we worked hard for them, and no one should stop us. I did my Master's at Yale, and I was living in the projects, and I would walk from home to school. I didn't really see anything unique about it though people thought it was so different. That's why I did my one woman show *From the Hood to the Ivy League* to show people that it doesn't matter where you are from, it is where you are going. I told my mom one day crying that I wished we just had the money, so we don't have to fly through all these hoops and be put on a brave face every time. My mum said "they got the money and resources, but you got the talent, and you need one another. Excellence is your currency for now." After my mum said that I stood up and worked so hard to ride through my pathway and it has taken me through a wonderful and really successful pathway. Yes! We live in an inequitable world, but I had to work my way up to where I got to the top and was the one doing the encouraging.

Interview with Takayuki Komagata

Takayuki Komagata: Biographical Information

Taka Komagata Tenor Praised for his “soaring lines” and “particularly lyrical” singing (Boston Musical Intelligencer), tenor Taka Komagata performs “with earnest gusto” (The Boston Globe) brightening classical music internationally with his sincere vocal style. Currently, as a Resident Artist at Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio of the Hawaii Opera Theatre, he starred as Bastien in a studio version of Mozart’s *Bastien & Bastienne*. This season, Taka made his company debut in the role of Manny in Gabriele Vanoni’s *Ellis*, a world premiere multimedia and immersive opera with Guerilla Opera in Boston. In December 2020, he made a Japanese debut in Tokyo and performed the male leading role in an original Christmas musical, *I’ll Be Home for Christmas* with Asakusa Kyugeki Theater. Recent engagements include Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), King Kasper (*Amahl and the Night Visitors*), The Friend (*The Fall of the House of Usher*), and Baron Zsupán (*Countess Maritza*).⁸³

Questions and Answers

Me: Have you ever felt odd being a colored opera singer?

TK: Oh, definitely yes! It is such a White and elitist society in the opera world. I have always felt weird being Japanese and singing opera. Maybe not a lot of discrimination because there are other Asians in the field too but definitely odd. I always felt like I was second class. People told me you aren’t European so you can’t really sing this. In a lot of productions, I have been the only Asian and even the only colored person in the room and that made me feel like I was invincible. I never realized until I moved back to Hawaii. Hawaii has a large

⁸³ Biography by Takayuki Komagata

Asian population, unlike Boston. It was such a relief performing in Hawaii with people who looked like me.

Me: What are some challenges that you had to go through being a Japanese opera singer both culturally and environmentally?

TK: I felt like I had to always try to be more American with my accent. I tried to correct my accent and tried to look like an Asian-American at least. I was constantly checking my grammar and trying to use more Americanized expressions, or no one would understand me and trying really hard to fit in, lose my accent and change who I really am to fit in. Also, diction wise, I had to sound American, or no one would understand me and that was frustrating sometimes. Also being a gay man in the industry and mostly being given straight man roles was hard for me. I was always trying to make up for something either accent wise or being who I am not.

Me: Did you feel like you lost a part of yourself doing all that?

TK: Yes! A good awakening moment for me was the *Japanese song night* that I did in 2020 before Covid hit. I realized that I have been trying so hard not to show my Japanese side for a long time. I shut down my Japanese side because I felt that it did not help me to become the pristine American opera singer that I wanted to be. Then I did the Japanese song night and a lot of people showed up and I was surprised because I didn't know that a lot of people really wanted to see that part. It dawned on me that I was Japanese first before being an American. I shouldn't hide my uniqueness.

Me: From your perspective as a Japanese person, do you think that Japanese opera can thrive in the opera world?

TK: The musical theatre industry is much bigger in Japan than opera. There are some well-known operas too. In fact, that was my project for the next *balcony series* before covid hit. So yes! Definitely! I do think that people would love to see them, at least from my experience.

Me: There is a popular saying that “colored singers/Black singers have to work twice as hard, what is your take on that?”

TK: I don’t think that’s true anymore especially after the “Black Lives Matter” and the “Stop Asian Hate” movement. I think people are more aware now and are making deliberate efforts to change this narrative. I would say prior to that, yes, we have had to work harder to be seen at all. To be honest, it might not be too hard now, but we still have to put more effort. However, I try not to think that way for my own sanity. Imagine walking into several audition rooms and everyone on the panel is White. It already makes you uncomfortable and you know you will be second preference over a White person because they can understand the person better.

Me: Do you see a world where opera is not just European, where we have several languages and cultures on main opera stages, and what can we do to get there?

TK: I do see a lot of potential, especially with the recent approach. Maybe the word “opera” is limiting, and we need to change the narrative behind it. There are so many great musicians out there that are making new music. I personally love working with live composers and not dead people. Hahahhaha! I love Mozart too. I do think there is a way, we just have to keep exploring and experimenting and seeking ways to create new things. We already have a strong platform for classical music, we just need to keep building other ways. I don’t want to be a traditional opera singer because I have more than that to share. We just need a platform to show it all. Hollywood, Broadway and other people in entertainment are changing and

making more efforts for more inclusivity. Opera just needs to keep up and be opened to doing the same.

Full Biographies of Composer and Librettist

Ayo Oluranti's Biography

Ayòdámóṣé Olúrántí (formerly Ogúnrántí) known as Ayò Olúrántí is a conductor, organist, theorist, and music scholar. He has been featured in performances and symposia in Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While his compositions have been performed around the globe, he has also given recitals on historic and famous organs in various parts of the world. In addition to his portfolio, he has efficiently designed and directed sacred music programs and was previously the Associate Organist and Composer-In-Residence at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh. He also conducted the Pittsburgh Festival Orchestra. He is a founding composer and member of Alia Musica, Pittsburgh and also a member of Bafrik, Brazil.

Presently, Olúrántí is a senior professor at the music department of the Mountain Top University, Nigeria. He is also in residence as a fellow in the Goethe-Institute (Germany) on the Postcolonial Research project and goes regularly to the Southwest region of Nigeria for fieldwork studying their traditional musical genres. To learn more about Oluranti [visit](https://www.oluranti.net/biography).⁸⁴

Miracle Ogbor's Biography

Miracle Ogbor, a native of Nigeria is a young professional soprano who is presently based in the United States of America. She performs various genres of music which includes Opera, Art songs, Oratorios, Popular music, Contemporary music, Negro Spirituals, Jazz

⁸⁴ Ayo Oluranti, Biography, official website. <https://www.oluranti.net/biography>

music etc. Miracle has played major roles in several opera productions. Her staged performances include scenes, full Opera productions and short performances in Nigeria, Canada, Germany, Russia, Dubai and in the United States.

Right from the inception of her career in Nigeria and now as an international artist, Miracle has performed with different choirs, making a number of international choir trips. Some of which includes the 9th Johannes Brahms International Choral Festival in Wernigerode, Germany in July 2015, where she won a gold medal with the Mountain Top Chorale (MTC) as a member of the choir and also as a Soloist. Exactly a year after that, she won two gold laurels with the same choir at the Interkultur World Choir Games Competition that took place in Sochi, Russia.

In 2016, she was awarded four awards by the Musical Society of Nigeria: The Mrs Francesca Emmanuel Prize for Best Female Operatic singer, the Bode Emmanuel Award for best Female singer, the Dr. Mrs. Femi Akinkugbe Prize award for Voice, and the Mr. Joseph Oparamanuike Graduate Opera Award. From the fall of 2017 till the spring of 2019, she was one of the soprano soloists with the Longy Women's Chorus, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In February 2020, Miracle won first position in the VA-NATS competition in her category. Also, in February 2021, she won first place in the same competition in a higher category.

Miracle has two associate degrees where she studied Vocal Performance at the MountainTop Conservatory of Music as a protégé of Mrs. Oyinkansola Akinselure and the MUSON Diploma School of Music, Lagos, Nigeria under the tutelage of Princess Banke Ademola. She has a Licentiate in Vocal Performance (LRSM) from the Associated board of the Royal School of Music (ABRSM) - the equivalent of a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. Also appended to her credentials are a Master's degree in Opera and Vocal performance from the Longy School of Music, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Miracle is currently

in her final semester as a doctoral student studying Vocal Performance, Pedagogy and Literature with Dr. Dorothy Maddison at James Madison University, JMU, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Program of Premiere Performance
 School of Music
presents the doctoral lecture opera of
Miracle Ogbor, soprano
in
ỌMỌ ẸGBÈTÓ D'OLÓRIN
(The Farmer's Daughter Becomes a Musician)

composed by

Dr. Ayò Olúrántí

Miracle Ogbor, *Libretto*
Abolade Daud Olamide, *Oriki Text*

with

Thomas O'Keefe, *conductor*
Dr. Dorothy Maddison, *Director*
Abigial Tonade , Seun Usman, *Choreographers*

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

8:00 pm

Forbes Concert Hall

Program
Scenes

1. Percussion Overture Festival in the Market Square
2. Scene One:
 - a. Narrator and Dialogue with Ayomide, Mr. Oluwasayi, Father and Mrs. Oluwaseyi, Mother
 - b. Aria: Asuramu
- i. Scene Two
 - a. Recitative with chorus and orchestra: Ki nlo n'sele?
 - b. Aria: Ayomide's Lament
 - c. Aria: Tin Tin To Jan To/Ayomide's Afrobeat
- ii. Scene Three
 - a. Percussion: Parents' Dance
 - b. Violin and Piano: Duet Horrific

- c. Percussion: Palace Dance
- d. Womens Chorus: Song of the Maids
- e. Dialogue: Narrator, Father, Guard, and Ayomide
- f. Chorus with Solo: Eru Oba
- g. Oriki Oba with African Drums
- h. Chorus with Solo: Eru Oba
- i. Finale with Soprano and Trumpet Solos: Gbajumo

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree Master of Music/Doctor of Musical Arts.

Miracle Ogbor is from the studio of Dr. Dorothy Maddison

Cast

Ayomide.....	Miracle Ogbor
Narrator.....	Samantha Whitaker Mr.
Oluwasayi, Ayomide’s Father.....	Michael Richardson
Mrs. Oluwasayi, Ayomide’s Mother.....	Olivia Romoniyi The
King.....	Darian Roby The
Queen.....	Alexandria Hunter
Dancer.....	Cheyenne Cassidi Sewell
Dancer	Layla Camille Herbin
Dancer.....	Lise Briggs Villager
and Dancer.....	Lauryn Boyle
Villager and Dancer.....	Carly Titus
Violinist and Queen’s Ladies.....	Louanna Colon King’s
Guard and Stage Manager.....	Devin Flynn
King’s Guard.....	Obrine Tamon
Baker and Villager.....	Rose Guo
Villager and Butcher.....	Sam Preece
Villager and Vendor.....	Ashley Seminario
Villager and Vendor.....	April Zoppa

Additional Villagers

Kevin Donlan, and Clemence Mbabazi

Orchestral Members

Conductor.....	Thomas O’Keefe
Pianist and Rehearsal Pianist.....	Adam Shenk
Flute.....	Dominic Baldoni

Bass Clarinet.....Gregorio Paone
 Contra-Bass Clarinet.....Hunter LaFreniere
 Trumpet.....Clint Linkmeyer
 Violins.....Isaac Cotnoir, Rachel Tan, Emily Werner
 Violas.....Dr. Diane Phoenix-Neal, David Swanson
 Cellos.....Isaiah Ortiz, Kim Souther
 Bass.....Alex Haldane
 Bass Guitar.....Obrine Tamon
 Talking Drum.....Ayo Oluranti

Percussionists

Will Alderman, Ryan Carlisle, Miles Cingolani, Michael Dolese, Shane Roderick

Permission from Composer

 Reply  Reply All  Forward  IM




Sat 5/7/2022 12:26 PM

ayo oluranti.net <ayo@oluranti.net>

Pictures

To  Ogbor, Miracle Oromena - ogbormo

 If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of JMU. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Miracle,

You are permitted to use the music score and pictures for 'Omo Agbe' for your research work.

Regards,

Ayò Olúrántí, PhD

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www.altusklass.com

Stretching to outdo yesterday - Kaizen's philosophy of continuous improvement.

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