

Aesthetic Philosophies of Yoruba Folk Musical Idioms

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Abstract

This paper defines the philosophical factors for evaluating the folk musical idioms among the Yorùbá of Western Nigeria. Different linguistic groups across the globe have peculiar interpretations for spectacles of musical sound. The paper examines how musical performances are interpreted and sentiments are reduced in music across the Yorùbá homeland. The paper uses oral interview and participant observation to investigate what music is and what is considered good in the context of aesthetic functions. It explores the performance ambience to illustrate its aesthetic Philosophies. The paper observes that the aesthetic values include Logogenic, pathogenic, culture indication, and so forth.

Keywords: Logogenic, Pathogenic, Aesthetic Philosophy, Aural and Visual Perception.

Introduction

Studies have shown that the kind of music people listen to or perform impinges on emotional expression, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation and physical response. Other considerations include validation of social norms and institution, as well as the stability of cultural values. These assertions define the aesthetic philosophy in Yorùbá music typologies. Aesthetics is a science that qualifies beauty, based on social value and ideals. It includes some sets of principle and social discourse that have credence to lend towards a good taste for art work, literature and nature. It encompasses deep emotional and intellectual enjoyment and artistic expression of life's beauty. Intellectuals talk about the thought process involving the aesthetic attitude of the mind towards creative arts.

The Paleolithic artistes make efforts to confine art in its magical conception through visual perception. Philosophers approach conception of arts through their word born thoughts. Musicians and composers impress beauty in the minds of the audience in audio-symbolic waves. Music conjures its essence in the social discourse of the people. Poetry and music arouse the sense of beauty, harmony and proportion. Moreover, music serves as a connecting link between artistic phenomenon and philosophy. An admirer of beauty considers his objects of judgment to be universally satisfactory, when it transgresses group limitations and imagination, especially in the evaluation of beauty.

Lugira (1973) describes the general concept of aesthetics as art's representation of beauty. In other words, the association of beauty and arts is a subject of aesthetics. It is an attempt to explain what music means, the nature and ground of excellence and greatness in music, the functions of music in the system of reality (Grove, 1974). In African music and dance, art materials are used symbolically. They have extra musical meaning. Materials such as horse tails, mirror, horns, sticks, beads, guns, broken pots, baskets, cutlass and swords are props, symbolizing belief and cultural identity. However, apart from being symbolically connoted, they have aesthetical values. The beauty of African music is the interrelationship between speech and formation of melody, song texts and historical documentation, interrelationship of music and dance, as well as conventions of musical practices (Nketia, 1974).

In this paper, aesthetics is perceived as an attempt to describe an aural perception of Yorùbá musical idioms, based on some factors that are enshrined in emotion-borne expressions of the people. However, aesthetics is subjective in performing arts: interpretations are derived from philosophical factors of musical sound. The philosophies are examined against the background of categories of community musicians. The combination of oral musical performance and accompanying instruments attracts dance as immediate positive reaction. Singing, drumming and dancing are unified in theatrical spectacles. It involves organized collaboration between the groups of artistes and participating audience in random music procedure. The duo of singing and instrumentation

enshrines Yorùbá visual arts, history, indigenous technology, social stratification, polity, social responsibilities, among many others.

Grove (1974) identifies three relative reasons for lack of literature for unified factors for music performance evaluation: first, he observes that the technical complexities of the production and notation of music often times intimidate the lay writers. Second, writers find it easier to describe the relationship between works of art and the realities they represent in other arts than in music. Third, human studies seem to favour intellectualism than emotional art of music, which appears to be a mere ornament of human culture; whose more vital structures could be more articulated by literary and pictorial means. Socio-cultural approaches to communication theory address the ways our understandings, meanings norms, roles and rules are worked out interactively in communication. Such theories explore various interactions, in the world in which people live. Posting such reality is however not an objective set of arrangements outside us, but constructed through a process of interaction in groups, communities and cultures. Pragmatist theory upholds the fact that people's aesthetic judgment is based partly on certain traditional norms, the physical senses and the people's emotional habits. Individual tastes often reside in the unconscious, for fear of unwholesome criticism or sarcasm. In this paper, our overt judgment is based mostly on the sense impressions and the traditional values of art as gathered in the collective or individual schema.

Categories and Functions of Yorùbá music

Three categories of oral genres are described in this paper. These include *Ìpè* or *Ìkì* (chants), *Ewì/Àyájó* (Secular or mystical poem), *Orin* (songs). Each of the categories has casual artistes, obligatory artistes and professional artistes that perform the music, with or without instrumental accompaniments. The genres also have secular as well as sacred typologies. Secular ones are performed in the open air, without any religious ceremonies or rituals; whereas, sacred ones are performed at designated coppice, often guarded with norms and religious practices. The overall performance is assessed based on the dexterity of the artistes in terms of the techniques of vocalization, depths of textual content, levels of audience motivation,

appropriateness of the performance occasions and adherence to cultural norms and practices (Adeleke, 2011; 87).

However, in whichever context, the functions are to entertain, reconcile, motivate, substantiate, recall history, as the occasion may suggest. In other related functional contexts, the genres are performed as accompaniments to rituals, festivals, ceremonies, communal labour, occupational carnivals and the rites of passage. In what follows, each of the categories is described in more details.

Category 1: Ìpè/Ìkì/Èsà (Chants)

Different chants are used in Yorùbá enclaves to preserve historical events and recite the praise poetry of people, sacred objects, ancestors, gods, thrones and so forth. There are set praise and mystical poems for certain names, towns, thrones, animals, trees vocations and groves. Chanters are very conversant with such poems and they appropriately integrate them into chant repertoires. The performance is often organized between a lead chanter, back-up singers, and ensemble of drums and percussions. Another partner in the procedure is the members of the audience. They participate as dancers or work in partnership with the refrain singers.

Table 1 below captures various chant typologies across Yorùbá enclaves. This is followed by musical example 1, a typical Yorùbá chant.

Table 1: Chant typologies across Yorùbá homeland

S/N	Names	Divinations	Performance Occasions	Community
1.	Ìjálá	Ògún	Ògún Festival	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
2.	Iwì or Èsa	Egúngún	Egúngún Festival	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
3.	Ìrèmòjé	Ògún	Burial of a hunter	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
4.	Èkún'yawó	Ceremony	Marriage Ceremony	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
5.	Èfẹ	Gẹlẹde	Bòlòjò Festival	Ègbádò
6.	Ràrà	Èṣù	Ceremonies	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
7.	Sàngó pípè	Sàngó	Sàngó Festival	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
8.	Èṣù pípè	Èṣù	Olóde	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
9.	Ògèdè	Rituals	Any occasion	Whole of Yorùbá enclave
10.	Ègè	Orò	Orò Festival	Ègbáland
11.	Alámò	Alámò	Ceremonies	Èkitì/Àkókó
12.	Àdámò	Ceremonies	Ceremonies	Ifẹ-Ìjẹṣá

13.	Agbè Ọba	Ceremonies	Royal ceremonies	Àwóri
14.	Olúigbó	Ceremonies	Social ceremonies	Ìjerò Èkìtì
15.	Àdan Àsikò	Ceremonies	Ceremonies	Òndò
16.	Ìké	Ceremonies	Ceremonies	Ègbádò
17.	Ìsàré	Ceremonies	Ceremonies	Ile-Ife

Source: Adélékè, 2011; Page 89

Musical example 1: A typical Yorùbá chant and refrains

Musical score for a Yorùbá chant. The score consists of six staves of music in a single system, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: Mo ri ba mo ri ba a ba ba a mi. A la bi o gun O de wu mi O de sin m bo. I ba pe le be o... wo: I ba pe le be e se Mo ni mo ju ba ki... to... mo ko rin o de. lo... I ba o gun o ni re a fe je we. O gun ko ro bi ti ko ro. bi ti ko... O gun ko ro bi ti ko O gun be ni le... O gun be lo ko... O gun be ni le a ro O gun be lo ke o do O gun be lo po po o na ti fa ja bo ri.

Refrain 1

Musical score for Refrain 1. The score consists of two staves of music. The lyrics are: Baba o mo lo mo Baba o mo lo lo mo Baba a mi lo ni mi. Ba - ba o - mo lo lo mo.

Refrain 2

Musical score for Refrain 2. The score consists of two staves of music. The lyrics are: O-ri-sa lo-guno-ri-sa lo-gun E- ni ba mo'gun ko ma fogunsere o... O-ri-sa lo'gun.

Source: Adélékè 2011; pages 90-91

Category 2: *Orin* (Songs)

Songs are classified as *Orin Òwe* (proverbial songs) to teach moral lessons or tranquil a ham-fisted discourse; *Orin Ìkìni* (Greetings), *Orin Ìmorìrì* (Appreciation songs), *Orin Àlò* (Folktale songs); *Orin Ìdàrò* (dirge); *Orin Ònkà fún Omodé* (Cradle songs); *Orin Ayeye* (Song for celebrations); *Orin Ìsèlú* (Songs for political motivation); *Orin Isé* (Occupational tunes) for self-motivation to ease the stress of labour; and so forth. Investigation reveals that there are songs associated with different groups of people in the society, like men's group, women's society and children's groups. Songs are separated according to sex and age and they are exclusively restricted by custom to be performed by the required groups (Adéléké, 2011; 91 – 92). As the case is with the chants, there are casual or occasional performers of the genres. Some others perform the music for their guild ceremonies and there are professional groups who perform the genre for commercial purposes. The function is similar in all the cases.

The celebrations of traditional marriages, childbirth, house warming and funeral remain the most plausible occasions where Yorùbá songs can be experienced. Singers attend such feasts in small groups with drums and other relevant instrumental ensembles. Itinerant musicians, sometimes, perform mainly for recreational purposes at the blacksmith workshop, during moonlight relaxation, wrestling contest, games and singers' personal relaxations. Songs are rendered while members of a community decide to create paths, work on the community rivers, expand the market place, and other related events. At such instances, the singers are engaged to sustain the people's strength at work and strengthen the spirit of communism.

Yorùbá song texts are generally philosophical and humorous, except in few cases like funeral occasions and rituals. They serve as historical commentaries or culture indicators. Some are used as birds of passage. Others are set to different kinds of vocal melodies to satisfy the interest of the singers and those who listen to them. Such songs texts are used to regulate social order and as storehouse of information. Texts of Yorùbá songs have intrinsic beauty: they teach language, history, morality, religion and so forth. They provide veritable

platforms for scholars of African languages to appropriate figures of speech.

Table 2 below presents some of the song types among the Yorùbá. This is followed by musical examples 2 & 3, typical Yorùbá songs that can illustrate the discourse so far.

Table 2: Examples of Song Typologies

S/N	Song Type	Description
1.	<i>Orin Ajôdún</i>	Yorùbá festival songs for a community of people who live in the same geographical catchments
2.	<i>Orin Àlô</i>	Folktale songs for children and adults usually performed during moonlight recreational activities to teach young people morality
3.	<i>Orin Ìbeji</i>	Songs that are sung for the twins, either by the mother who may be seeking for monetary rewards for proper upbringing of the children. It is usually accompanied with <i>Sěǹlì</i>
4.	<i>Orin Òkú</i>	Songs for the dead in form of dirge are quite common among the Yorùbá. The relatives and the generality of people in that neighborhood perform such music in honour of the deceased.
5.	<i>Orin Eré Omódé</i>	Children game songs are also common among peer group. Some are to aid memory, while others are satiric.
6.	<i>Orin Èfě</i>	Satirical songs
7.	<i>Orin Işě</i>	These are work songs to reduce stress and fatigue while working. Different work groups have their peculiar ones. There are some that have less group restrictions as well.
8.	<i>Orin Ònkà</i>	These are examples of songs that are used to count something, most especially <i>Eré Ayò</i>
9.	<i>Orin Òşèlú</i>	Songs that are used to mobilize political associations and to promote slogans and manifestos among rival political organizations.
10.	<i>Orin Ìrejú</i>	Songs that are meant to send people to sleep or to relax their muscles from tensions. They are common among the ruling class.
11.	<i>Orin Ìgbafě</i>	These are examples of songs for recreational purpose. Praise singing of different types will fit into this category.

12.	<i>Orin Ifẹ</i>	Love songs are very common during traditional marriage ceremonies in Yorùbá communities, most especially by the bridal maids, in order to prepare the bride for her experience with her husband.
13.	<i>Orin Ìpolówó Ojá</i>	These are songs meant to call the attention of the passer-by to the article sold by an individual. It can come in different forms and textures.

Source: Adélékè, 2008; Pages 212-213

Musical examples 2&3: Some typical Yorùbá songs

LAYE OLUGBON

A Court Bard

La ye Olugbon a ke bo run meje e o ma fi we lo rin Laye Are-sa a ke borunne fa
e o ma fi-we lo rin Laye O ye wu mi a ra ko ko a ra ran a ra san yan ba ba a-so A fo
le lo le pe le yi o dun ko ke ru ko sa gbo ko lo

Source: Adélékè, 2008; Page 245

LAU EREBE

LASI ATATALO

La u e-re-be e-re be lau; La u e-re-be e-re-be
lau; O-wo 'le la n lo; A o ma ya wo fi se o; La-u e-re-be e-re-be la u

Source: Adélékè, 2008; Page 244

Category 3: *Ewi/Àròfò* (intoned poetry)

In Olátúnjí (1984; 37) we learn about some features shared by Yorùbá poetic types. These include, word-play, i.e. the juxtaposition of lexical items which are somehow similar in shape, to produce an effect of verbal dexterity. The commonest form is a pair of lexical items which differ only by their tones. He observes that tonal word-

play does occur on lexical items which exist in the language, though such words must be phonologically plausible in the Yoruba language. The second area is non-casual language, i.e. lexical and grammatical texts which do not usually occur in casual social discourse. Olátúnjí (1984; 37) explains that those words have restricted tonal modifications and unusual lexical formations which do not occur in ordinary conversational pros; either because they are archaic or because they are restricted to poetry or geographic areas in their occurrence. The third area is figurative languages, such as allusion, personification, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, irony and euphemism. Allusions are made to myths, legends, historical events and the practices of the Yoruba. In personification, non-human things are endowed with human feelings and attributes. There are exaggerated descriptions, i.e. attribution to people or things of values and qualities far beyond the state of things. The performance of these genres requires a lead recitalist, back-up instrumentalists, refrain singers and audience. The occasions for the performance are similar to other genres described above.

Table 3 presents different types of Yorùbá poems recited at different occasions with or without musical instrument to accompany them.

Table 3: Examples of Yorùbá poetic genres

S/N	Poem Types	Concise description
1	Oríkì	A typical Yorùbá has praise name (e.g. Ojó, Àiná) that can be recited in the context of oral composition
2	Ese'fá	This is called Ifá scripture or Ifá corpus. It contains Ojú Odù and Omo Odù and all other textual foundations related to the worship of Ifá
3	Ofò	These are mystical texts often used to conjure magical power for good or bad influence in the society.
4	Òwe	Yorùbá proverbs are regarded as 'horses' that convey philosophical meaning. If there is a mixed-up in the meaning of a Yorùbá concept, proverb is used to search it out.
5	Àlò Àpamò	These are folk tales and riddles that require the listeners to proffer answers as required by the presenter.

6	Àlò Àpagbè	Another folk tale types that are narrative in structure. In most cases, it contains some call and response song-types that can be performed by both the narrator and the listeners.
7	Àyájó	Some kind of ritual blessing often presented in the context of incantation.
8	Ògèdè	Yorùbá word for incantation
9	Ewì	These are Yorùbá poems that can be recited acapella or with some form of musical instrument accompaniment. It has several categories.
10	Ìwúre	Mystical blessings in form of prayer for an individual or a community of people from a traditional priest to the people. It can be recited acapella or accompanied with metal jingles or rattles.

Source: Adélékè, 2008; Page 214

Creative Techniques

People's traditions evolved from older generation to the younger ones. The intellectual appreciation of arts along with the intuitive empathy is based on the instinctual drive of extroversion, which depends always on history and tradition. There is a belief that songs are taught by people's ancestors, through dreams and *Ìsòyè* (charms that can aid memory). The textual and melodic contents of such songs are owned by the community. The way an artiste of Yorùbá oral genres is inspired to spontaneously create new music or re-present an existing folk music in performance occasions reflect on his training procedure, the competence of his own master, appropriate socio-cultural occasion, the audience and the extra musical functions the musicians intend to achieve during and after the performance. The creative inspirations that enable them to sustain their performances for as long as people want to listen are attributed to material incentives, wine and religion (Adélékè, 1997; 18).

The artistes perform to the optimal whenever there are material incentives. They show excitement and get inspired to create new tunes and texts. They use self-introduction, to register their personality; instrumental interlude, to allow artistes to refresh their memory; extemporization, to create episodic movements; and descriptive stories, to build repertoires. Other creative techniques include

personification, to attribute human feelings to non-human objects; allusions to myths and legends; homage to thrones, dead heroes, masters, elders; *Ìwíre*, to bless the community; incantation to ward-off evil spirits; dialogue among the lead vocalists and the accompanying vocalists in a call-and-response style; and slang that is in vogue to create fun.

Training of Artistes

This begins from infancy and continues to adulthood through participant observation in games, social and religious ceremonies, social functions, festivals and so forth. Children imbibe and internalize the musical sounds of the culture in which they grow, through active involvement. Unless the learning began early enough, the trainee might not be proficient in performance. The teaching and learning process has subtle feature of formality, irrespective of the fact that training procedure is family based and more of father-son relationship, and not of classroom formalities (Adeleke, 2011; 83-103). The training procedure can stimulate the development of imagination, emotions as well as deep passion for the art. This is essentially a learned behaviour that is deeply rooted in oral tradition. Singing and drumming are group activities and the audience is never passive.

Categories of Music Makers

In Yorùbá traditional music, musicians are identified with the types of music they play. Words like *Asunrárà* (Ràrà chanter), *Akéwì* (poet), and *Alubàtá* (Bata drummer) etc. describe the specific types of music an individual is involved with. Specialization is therefore held to its highest esteem in Yoruba traditional music. It is not a common practice for a *Dùndún* drummer to be a *Bàtá* drummer at the same time. They are broadly categorized into professional and non-professional, occasional, obligatory performers and minstrels.

- 1) Professionalism is restricted to some set of people who are born into a family which has a long history of specialist musicians. They have elaborate training procedures as prescribed by the culture. They are regarded as community musicians and function in that regard at ceremonial occasions. Examples of this

include *Akígbé Oba* (Court Bards), *Alusèkèrè*, *Àyàn Aludùndún*, *Bàtá* or *Kósó* etc.

- 2) Non-professional performers are music makers that are not necessarily born into *Àyàn* family. Their involvement with music is spontaneous and infrequent. They play music to fulfill one obligation or the other. They are not systematically trained as the professional ones. The society does not regard them as musicians. Nketia (1978) refers to them as intermittent performers.
- 3) There are occasional performers. Prominent in this class are the *Egbé-mode* (association of hunters) with their *Ìjálá/Ìrèmòjé* music. They are hunters by profession yet they have occasions such as *Ìsípà-ode*, *Odún-ògún* etc., to make music. Anytime there is an occasion for them to come together as a group, they need not invite any musician. They entertain themselves with *Ìjálá* or *Ìrèmòjé* as the occasion may suggest.
- 4) There are also obligatory performers, which are not perceived as musical events. It is rather a divinatory process between a diviner and *Alaniyan* (client). For instance, *Babaláwo* (Ifá priest) chants *Ìyèrè Ifá*; *Adósù-Sàngó* (Sàngó priest) chants to praise or invoke the spirit of *Sàngó* etc. In the society, people do not regard them as musicians, despite the music they make during oracular consultations. However, nobody can deny the fact that they make music. Their music making can be considered as obligatory to both the people and the divinities they stand to represent.
- 5) There are also the minstrels. They perform on the street and other informal social gatherings, to praise people and solicit for monetary incentives. People regard them as *Alágbe* (scroungers), those who need help for survival. Majority in this category have one disability or the other that hinder them from embarking on other vocations than street begging; as such, they take to begging in order to keep alive. It should however be noted that neither begging nor singing is considered their profession, but they are involved with both.

Aesthetic Philosophy and Evaluation

The instrumentality of shrewdness in performing arts can be divided into four considerations. These include social traditions and goal

consciousness, subjective attitude and perception, forms of the elements and efficiency of communicating the implied message. Social values are formed through historical process, as a part of mental processes of reasoning and judgment. A clearly defined forum where people gather to assess musical performances is quite uncommon in Yoruba society. However, an average Yoruba man is equipped with the perceptual depiction of a prototype performance of their traditional musical genres. People can distinguish between *Ràrà* and *Ewì* vocal genres, as well as *Dùndún* and *Bata* instrumental genres. The following expressions are in constant considered as factors to express complimentary values placed on such recitals.

Logogenic Factor

It is instructive to observe that musical performance must communicate in one way or the other to the audience. The non-verbal communication is very vital to the performance assessment of the audiophiles. Musical sound is not perceived as a sheer osteopathy of sound patterns. Music sound has no meaning unless it says something. A good performer is assessed by what he says and how he says it in the context of his presentation. Logogenic factor is illustrated with the following expressions, which are invariably used to describe the quality of performance in Yoruba traditional music:

1. *Òkú Ewùré nsòrò bi Èniyàn* (The skin of a dead goat is talking like human beings). This is a common expression in *Dùndún* music.
2. *Bàtá Ngbin kìn* (Bata is grunting). This, in a sense, reflects the dexterity and the proficiency of the master drummer on *Bàtá* music.
3. *Bàtá nró kanlá-kanlá* (*Bàtá* is sounding strong). This may be reflecting on the rhythm of the internal patterns of the *Omele Bàtá*
4. *Bèmbé nkù bi Òjò* (*Bèmbé* is thundering like cloud burst). This describes the blending of all the components parts of the ensemble as a Yorùbá war drum.
5. *Agogo nró kangó-kangó*. This is the sound produced on Agogo (gong or bell). It describes the sound produced either in ritual

context or by the town crier to get the attention of the common people for the message to be disseminated.

6. *Ko Orin bi Àwòko* (singing like *Àwòko*, a type of bird). The word is used to describe singers that are very prolific and versatile in gliding tone and tonal counterpoints.
7. *Ó npe èdè bíi Ológbùró* (singing like *Ológbùró*, another type of birds). The expression is used to describe singers that are metaphysical and axiomatic in their song texts.

Pathogenic Factor (Emotion-borne)

Apart from the communicative factors discussed above, philosophical assessment is also placed on how expressive the music is (i.e. emotion-touch). This is common with ritual music and dirges. The sound produced in ritual music is intended to touch the emotion of the people. Such words as the following are used in ritual music of the Yorùbá people. The style of singing or chanting in traditional vocal music could be emotive, expressive, innovative etc. The vocal quality is expected to be very powerful.

1. *Ohùn Arò* (sentimental vocal quality). This type of vocal quality is preferred in such songs as *Ìrèmòjé*, *Ràrà*, *Sango pípè*, *Èkún-yàwó* etc.
2. *Orònbúramù-ramù* (The bullroarer is roaring momentarily). The expression is used to describe the sound produced by *Orò* cult. The deeper the sound the more emotional the listeners feel threatened. Perhaps that accounts for the reason why the sound is used to impose a curfew.
3. *Ohùn Iyò* (sweetening vocal quality like salt). The expression is used to describe the vocal quality of a very good singer/chanter.
4. *Ohùn gooro* or *Agogo* (gong voice). The expression is used to describe a singer/chanter with a very powerful and penetrating vocal quality and it is desirable at festival occasions.
5. *Ohùn Ikònkò* or *Ohùn Agbè* (frog or gourd voice). The expression describes a croaked vocal quality. The voice quality is often preferred at ritual occasions for *Ìwúre* (ritual blessing) and *Èsà Egúngún* (chant for the masquerade).

Media Factor

On very few occasions the material used to prepare the musical instruments are also assessed. The wood, the skin and the straps with all the jingles, ornaments and inscriptions made on musical instruments also attract some aesthetic evaluation, linking their qualities in craftsmanship with the sounds of music produced on them by the performers. The instruments used and the appropriateness of musical rendition are identified with the spirit and mood of the traditional festivities or cultural activities. The following expressions and proverbs are in consonant use with the above observation.

1. *Láìkú Ekìrì, Eníkéni ko le fi awo re se Gbèdu* (Unless Ekìrì dies, no one can use its skin to make Gbèdu, a type of drum). This is pointing to the fact that some specific skins are preferred to the others, especially at some socio-religious occasions.
2. *Onírúúrú igi lo n be nígbó kátó fi igi òmò gbé Gbèdu* (There are all kinds of trees in the forest before *Omo* tree is used to make Gbèdu). Some specific drum shells are preferred to the others in the preparation of musical instruments. In most cases the wood carvers prefer trees by the roadside as drum shell. The belief here is that the tree is conversant with human voices. The tanners prefer goat skin for the talking drums because of its closeness to human speech mechanism.

Rhythmic Sensitivity

Rhythm generally refers to the actual choice and distribution of notes within a measure. It is largely controlled by metre. Metre is the organization of musical time into recurring accents. Each complete pattern constitutes a measure, and measures are divided by bar lines in music. A particular pattern is indicated by a metre signature. In Yorùbá music, rhythm can be percussive, sequential or melodic. It is expected that rhythmic movement must suggest appropriate reactions to the listeners – to dance, cry, fight, run away, etc. A rhythmic sequence is the repetition of a motive or pattern on successively higher or lower pitch levels. Rhythmic sequence is more prominent in the recitation of Yorùbá poems. In Yorùbá chants, rhythms are free and asymmetrical, i.e. phrase lengths are not necessarily equal. Melodic rhythms in

Yorùbá folk songs contain percussive motion (strong pulsations and accentuations) and sequential patterns that may appear repetitive, but effectively instigate body movement in form of dance and other related actions.

Yorùbá songs and accompaniments create lots of *Polyrhythmic* textures – two or more independent time lines in a piece or music to produce additional element of contrast or variety. In some of the sampled music, there was *Agogo* timeline, *Sèkèrè* timeline and other timelines using *hocket* techniques, i.e. Complimentary patterns of *Ìsaájú* and *Àtélé* in *Dùndún* music. A good singer must be able to synchronize the rhythmic features of songs with the accompanying instrumentation. The excerpts below illustrate the above better and it shows the attitude of the people to rhythmic sensitivity.

<i>Bo ba se pemi niwo ni,</i>	If I were to be you
<i>Nba fapa jo, fapa jo</i>	I would use my arms to dance
<i>Bo ba se pemi niwo ni,</i>	If I were to be you
<i>Nba fese jo, fese jo</i>	I would use my legs to dance
<i>Bo ba se pemi niwo ni,</i>	If I were to be you,
<i>Nba fi gbogbo ara jo</i>	I would use the whole of my body to dance

Apart from the excerpt above, sometimes people refer to dancers as *Eni ti o ni etí ìlù* (someone who understands the drum language). In some other contexts, if an artiste is very good in dancing, Yorùbá people refer to him or her as *Kòkòrò* (insect). Sometimes they contextualize his art with an expression like *Wò ó bí ó ti n ran bí Òkòtó* (look at how he/she is spinning like *Òkòtó*).

Good Memory

Yorùbá musicians are generally regarded as oral historians. They recite and sing historical legends, chronologies and genealogies. In the song cited on page 8, the singer recalled the period when there was industrial insurgency and its associated blessing – *Láyé Olúgbón, a ké Ìborùn méje* – There are so many such facts of history that musicians recite to invigorate the mind of the people. In addition to the

aforementioned, the musicians use music to commemorate important occasions.

Creativity

The creative acumen of the artistes must be very high, as they sporadically create songs in performance context. They also improvise freely over known songs and texts. The greatest test of their resourcefulness is the random creation of music in performance context. However, the artistes believe in *Ìsòyè* (charms that can aid memory). They believe in using singing birds such as *Àwòko*, *Ológbùró*, *Eye Ìbákà* and *Odíderé* as totem for their performing groups. The philosophy behind this is connected to some metaphysical practices in African belief system that one singing bird is superior to the other. Religious chanters believe in *Ifá rírán* (repeated citation of *Ese Ifá* to their teachers) as part of their creative impetus. Such instances gave birth to the saying *Koro-koro làáránfá Adití*. They draw inspiration from incantations, local wine and religious sentimentalities.

Conclusion

The cultural activities of the Yorùbá people are permeated with one musical activity or the other. As discussed in this paper, it is important to stress that the aesthetic philosophy of Yorùbá traditional musical performances depend on a number of factors: the music must say something; it must touch the emotion of the people; appropriate music must be played at the appropriate occasions; musicians should be rhythmically sensitive, possess good memory, creative and must have enviable vocal quality. These factors are expressed in various philosophical traditions, especially in day-to-day music and social intercourse. Music is assessed by what it communicates and how the message is psycho-interconnected with the attendant emotional effects.

The value judgment placed on the musical performance is attributed to Yorùbá aesthetical philosophies, as described in the foregoing. In addition, people talk about the physical outlook of the medium, that is, the voice or instrument used in producing the sound of music by identifying its appropriateness and effects with the spirit of the

occasion. All these are enshrined in the day-to-day social discourse on Yoruba traditional music. In conclusion, we can say that musical performance among the Yorùbá of western Nigeria is not an absolute phenomenon. It possesses connotative meanings, which are enshrined in the depths of Yorùbá social philosophy and religious intercourse.

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