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African Vocal Art Music and a Proposed Guideline for Singing: Ghanaian Context

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Abstract

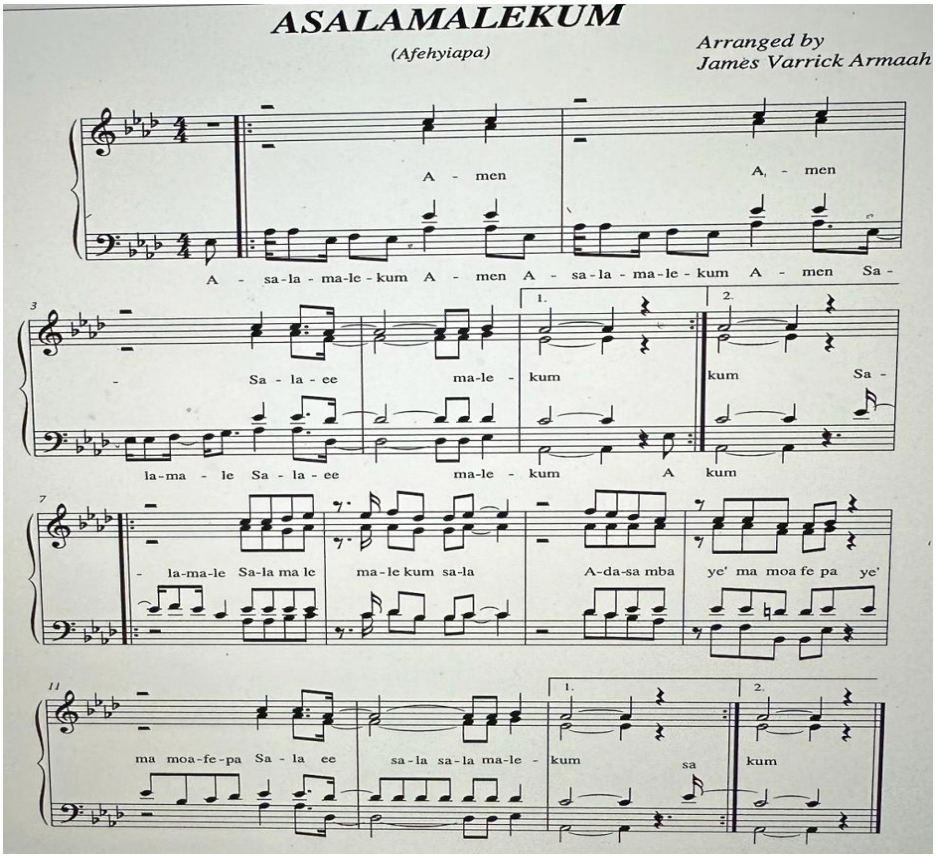
The article is a position paper that discusses the craft of compositions in African Art music in Ghana and highlighting a propositioned guideline in the performance of such created art musical pieces. Given the foundational inspiration from Euba's notion of Interculturalism in music, there's a noticeable lack of comprehensive documentation regarding vocal techniques aimed at advancing and instructing performers in the rendition of African Art musical performance. Regarding the selection of the compositions involved in this paper, transcription and analysis of the works were purposively selected, to consider how and why the techniques of various classifications were established in the compositions. It is envisaged that the study will serve as a work of posterity and an introduction to vocal techniques in the singing of African Art music.

Keywords: Art Music, singing guidelines, interculturalism, musical hybridity

1. **Introduction**

In the field of African Art music, numerous scholars have spoken about its hybridity as having a long tradition (Euba, 1992; Kazarow, 1993; Sadoh, 2004; Nketia, 1974). Many of these scholars see African art music as symbiosis of African and Western idioms only as Euba, 1989; Mensah, 1998; Nketia, 1974; Dor, 2005 express, but it seems palpable that the adoption of musical resources could be extended to all other continents and traditions of various worlds (an addition to the reviewed literature aforementioned), when issues of hybridity are raised in music discourse. For this reason, I may settle on the definition by Kimberlin and Euba (1995) that it is intercultural music in which elements from two or more cultures are integrated. African Art Music being described as musical hybridity or intercultural music irrespective of the origin is more preferable.

On condition that an arrangement of an existing composition (popular, traditional, etc.) which is executed into Art music by an arranger could be referred to as Art Music, then evidence may point to Armaah's arrangement of *Asalamalekum* (as spelt by the arranger) which has various forms in spelling depending on the culture; This is popularly known as an Arabic greeting (by Muslims) which means "May peace be unto you." However, it is interspersed with 'Amen' which is found in the Hebrew Bible (both Old and New Testament), the Egyptian mythology, in Judaism, etc. and has diverse meanings subject to the culture or the specific group of people. Once again, the composer introduces another code-switch (See Amuah 2021) to the Fante language of Ghana. Here, aside from the origin of the text from different parts of the world, the rhythmic structure of the music is mostly detected in the highlife music of Ghana (see Collins 1976, 1989, Coffie 2020, Matczynski 2011), or one may simply refer to the same as the rhythmic structures of the *Kpanlongo* dance of Ghana. The rules in the harmonic structure are purely western in style. For such a reason, African Art Music could be limited if it is always described as the application of practices from Africa and the Western world only as already stated.



Excerpt 1: Illustrating African Vocal art music

It is worth stating that if a specific musical piece is to be studied critically, one may detect features of a specific music existing in other jurisdictions, such as musical characteristics of the Ewe, found in Ashanti, Nigerian found in Ghanaian, to mention a few. In this case, could there be *Intraculturalism* or *Multiculturalism* as far as music is concerned? However, I am very much aware that the term hybridity also remains opposed among scholars in humanities for its origins (biological sciences) and moreover, the association with race, which makes the term very problematic. Nevertheless, it is chosen over terminologies like "creolization" or "acculturation" defined as integration that happens in the context of contact between previously separate cultures, such as the colonial encounter, because it escapes hierarchical phenomenon (Weiss, 2014).

In addition to this thought, several others and enquiries on this subject have been very argumentative and idiosyncratic in various ways. That is to say 'such

contentions range from the identity of who composes African art music, what constitutes African art music, stylistic distinctions of such musical compositions, and educational methods for teaching composition in Africa, to sources of creative inspiration as well as resources for such music' (Onyeji, 2019).

Considering the concept of interculturalism by Euba (1992) in music which I consider as the motivation for this article, he defines contemporary African Art music as "Neo-African Art Music" and considers these forms as part of contemporary display in interculturalism. Euba notes that "Neo-African Art music" may be broadly divided into four categories, namely

1. Music based entirely on western models and in which the composer has not consciously introduced any African elements.

2. Music whose thematic material is borrowed from African sources but which is otherwise western in idiom and instrumentation.

3. Music in which African elements form an integral part of the idiom (through the use of African instruments, or texts, or stylistic concepts and so forth) but which also includes non-African ideas.

4. Music whose idiom is derived from African traditional culture, which employs African instruments, and in which the composer has not consciously introduced non-African ideas.

Kimberlin and Euba are of the same principle that the composer of this music usually belongs to one of the cultures from which the elements are derived. With no disrespect, I am not sure I concur due to the first category described by Euba above. Few examples in this category (as described by Euba) are as follows: Addaquay's Oratorio entitled *Laudateur Christus*, Annan's *But they that wait* and Menson's *The new born Prince of Peace*, all composed by Ghanaian Art Music composers. The examples given is to state that these composers do not belong to any of the cultures; The text, melodic, harmonic and rhythmic sonorities are all Western in idiom, but could also contain other cultural influences apart from the Western idioms. Therefore, if not for this category which has not been captured in the next set of classifications below, I could have been of one mind with Euba for affirming that Composers of intercultural music:

• value highly intimate knowledge and understanding of creative and performance processes of other cultures; these can be achieved by

- synthesizing indigenous and foreign compositional processes and techniques.

- maintain integrity of their indigenous value systems while utilizing musical elements, processes and techniques from other cultures to expand their modes of expression for the creation of performance of new music.

- advocate holistic approaches to teaching music(s) of specific cultures involving methodologies applicable to diverse groups of students from different backgrounds, having different objectives and who may be unfamiliar with the philosophical and social norms of the cultures whose music(s) they seek to learn.

- consider extra musical contextual factors in determining Cross-cultural approaches to musical analysis and in defining ethnic norms.

Subsequently, these elements demonstrate that *Intercultural* music comprises all types of music(s) including the traditional and contemporary, popular and art, and range from those music(s) with mass appeal to the very esoteric (Bayley & Dutiro, 2016; Dunbar-Hall, 2007; Ross, 2016; Stanyek, 2004). Again, it is worthy of note that as much as the discussions, practices and guidelines in this article could be of great assistance to African Vocal Art music, the attention or in other words, the report of the entire discourse has been limited to compositions in Ghana. In this regard, with the exception of musical hybridity and interculturalism in music composition of Africa that has previously been reviewed, vocal music is the succeeding phenomenon to be examined. As far as Western music is concerned, documentation on the coaching of singing, implementations that serve as vocal-warm up for both soloists and choruses, as well as materials for techniques in singing are all universally obtainable (Hirano, 1988; Miller, 1996; Potter, 2006; Chapman, 2021). As a model, Howard and Austin (1989) review significant elements in the skill of singing; The entire book entitled 'Born to Sing' focuses on breathing, support, focusing the vocal cords, Articulation, Volume control, vibrato, Placement, resonance, Vocal colors, lower and upper registers, the pop and classical sound respectively.

One of the foremost complications this article seeks to address is the proclamations made by these authors. In the first place, the preface of 'Born to sing' by Howard and Austin reads 'the course is designed for anyone who loves singing.' Moreover, Luo et al. (2020) also note that 'Vocal techniques, such as 'breathy' and 'vibrato', enrich the sound and are an integral part of singing.'

However, I respect these statements by the scholars mentioned above, but from my perspective, the alternative solution is to be specific on the kind of `music for the kind of vocal technique (an opinion). In certainty, the saying 'Good singing' or 'Singing well' is impressionistic or culturally defined if 'Music in world cultures' becomes the topic of the day. Case in point, a large portion of vocal techniques revealed by these authors could be inapplicable for singers of traditional music in Sub-Saharan Africa, the near east (i.e, from Morocco to India), Asia, and many other cultures. Even so, at the moment these traditions would have to inculcate some of the techniques such as Articulation, volume control, vibrato, and few others, the methodology in the singing may vary from one culture to the other. Yet, several authors persistently make a broad-spectrum proclamation that technicalities in their books are devised for singers all over the world. It seems to me that these misleading statements could have negatively impacted African Vocal Art Singers who aim to perform African music in a manner closely resembling Western styles, regardless of the original composition's style.

Following the exposition, one would like to identify what this paper seeks to achieve. As a voice instructor for over 20 years of practice, there has been a consistent encounter. During one of the sessions in class at the University of Ghana, a student asked,

> 'Sir, all the vocal exercises and techniques learnt in class have been very helpful, but could same techniques be applied in the singing of the African pieces'?

Honestly, answering this question presented a significant challenge to my thinking; Hence the motivation for the discussion in this paper. Apart from the question asked by my student, other encounters such as rehearsing a choir for a concert that involves both Western and African pieces was a challenge as far as vocal techniques in the singing of the African pieces were concerned.

In point of fact, it must be accredited that efforts have been expanded to create new forms of contemporary African Art Music that combines Western and African musical idioms (and probably other cultures) into artistic vocal works. However, the paucity of the documentation of vocal techniques that seeks to promote and educate practitioners on the singing of Art music in Africa is evident. Particularly in Ghana, few documentations or papers can be categorized under the structure of vocal techniques in the singing of Art music. There seems to be no system for the act; This makes it arduous to distinguish between the approach of singing Western and African Art Music. Approximately,

all vocal exercises and techniques are executed in the practice of western music. Although transfer of knowledge could be evident for the description of all these styles as art music, not all western methods might be suitable for the singing of Ghanaian vocal art music for the interculturalism in the approach of the compositions. One may want to inquire if vocal warm-up or documented techniques in singing is only a western practice? This article intends to fill this gap by proposing few techniques that could serve as a guide to singers in Ghana and probably Africa. For the hybridity that Ghanaian Art music presents as stated from the beginning, the interpretation of the music may also employ the technique of hybridity in approach.

It goes without stating that few enquiries are obvious to be considered as far as this exercise is concerned; Could there be disparities between Western and African melodic sonorities? If yes, or no, how does a singer approach a particular melodic configuration? How does harmonic progressions of a vocal work (being accompaniment or voices) affect the singing style of a piece? And since Ghanaian languages are tone languages, how does speech melody and the dynamics in speech affect singing? With respect to articulation in singing, could social, political or economic causes affect pronunciation of words by a singer or construction of phrases by a composer? With respect to dynamics, must an African art singer(s) apply dynamics in accordance with textual drama or progressions of music? Definitely, these critical questions may serve as the basis for the findings.

For the selection of compositions in this paper, transcription and analysis of the works were purposively selected, to consider how and why the techniques of various classifications were established in the compositions. The selection of all the pieces were based on the fact that each piece is a Ghanaian art work that presents a unique way of using both African and other idioms of various cultures in the world, and secondly, the composers had different intentions in employing the techniques discussed in this article. Also, I attended choral concerts in Ghana, as well as listened to various performances on YouTube and all social media platforms that Ghanaian art music performances could be accessible. To make a systematic discussion in the entire article, I would like to review some few topical issues in the composition of Vocal Art Music in Ghana, followed by the appropriate technique that could be employed in the singing.

2. **Singing in African Art Music**

Melodic sonorities in compositions would be the opening discussion under specific classifications here, followed by the harmony, and then the advocated approach in the singing. First and foremost, could there be a so-called phenomenon termed as an *African Melody*? Regarding this subject and beyond, (i.e., recognizing the source of a melody), few characteristics one could anticipate in ascertaining the source of a melody could encompass language, rhythm, and probably the establishment of melodic shapes which may be popular within a particular group of people or composers. Some would like to consider the mode or the scale of the precise melody in question. In expressing reality, it is not always simple or straightforward to distinguish an African melody from a melody in any other continent, especially when the first category of interculturalism as stated by Euba (1992) comes to bear. Here, one may ask; Is an African melody the one that is composed by an African, or vice-versa in parallelism? Again, while these constant notes, that is the diatonic or non-diatonic seems to appear in all kinds of melodies whether African, western, or other continents, with the exception of experimental melodies or a specific tradition that decides to create with other tones, how could one distinguish African melodies from others? Also, are we referring to melodies of African Art music composers in Sub-Saharan Africa, the diaspora, or which category of Africans in question?

Apart from these questions above, I am very much conscious of countless questions that may present themselves. As far as I'm concerned, it may not be very suggestive to characterize or describe a specific melodic (or even harmonic) progression to the identity of a composer in this context. To put it in another way, a composition could easily be described by another as follows: '*this melody sounds like* ……' or simply '*this is an Arabian melodic progression*.' After all, the appearance of sound in music, may not always be centered on the producer of the music. To give a clue, a professional musician who might have been a Christian could decide to create music for Muslims, Buddhists, Occultic groups or any other set of people upon commission and requirement; In my opinion, once the music is accepted, who cares where the music originates? In this context of the discussion, it strikes me that the advice to composers to create identity in their music by preventing the act of mimicking styles of other compositions may have to be discussed as another topic for another day. To sum up, description of a melody in this context focuses on the stylistic approach rather than nationalistic or individualistic.

As a follow up on the dialogue above, a composer may be tempted to borrow an exact language(s) either within or outside his culture. In this regard, it becomes testing (in most cases) to recognize the source of the product especially when the composer is unknown. For instance, Addaquay (a Ghanaian Composer) who is a Fante (from the central region of Ghana), decided to compose *Mikafu mawu kplɛ dzidzɔ* in the Ewe language (from the volta region of Ghana). Singers from the Ewe land, including Togo and Benin perform this music with glee, exclusive of knowing the composer is not an Ewe. This is because the text was made available to him by his instructor and supervisor, Mawuyram Quessie Adjahoe, who is an Ewe from Peki in the South Dayi district from the volta region of Ghana. In contrast, a composer could also create music in another culture and it may be very evident due to wrong construction of text and inefficiency in the melodic, rhythmic or harmonic language of the people.

Furthermore, it becomes obvious that (most) composers that continuously create works in a particular language may be native speakers or related speakers in many ways. Of course, there is little doubt that some composers are multilingual in composition (which is not common). Significantly, composers may have the liberty to apply code-switching in compositions (Amuah & Wuaku, 2021). On the other hand, the rhythmic configuration is another specific to detect when it comes to segregating melodies of other continents from Africa. It is for this reason that I concur with Dor (1992) for arguing that rhythm became the first and the most important parameter in which Amu found his African idiomatic expression. Though rhythmic borrowing is very evident in compositions, the continuous application of a particular rhythmic structure gives an idea of the source of a specific melody. An example is the rhythmic combination of both voices and accompaniment from bars 35 to 53 of the work 'Help Lord!' which is the first chorus in Mendelssohn's Elijah. That is a typical pattern of *Gabada* (at a slower tempo) music from the volta region of Ghana. The difference here is that Mendelssohn may not resolve in executing the entire work in this pattern as an African composer would like to establish. In Towormenye Kofi Ansah's extensive work entitled *Atakokodabi,* he displays different rhythmic patterns from *Agbadza* to *Gabada* interchangeably, yet all these patterns are African. At the same time, the melodic contour of a piece could assist one to classify the source of a specific melody. It is obvious that the opening melodic passages of Nketia's *Monkamfo No* is very modal (could be Phrygian or any other description by an analyst) and could just give an idea that it comes from Africa. The presence of speech melody in this work (and even others) is also a potential detector.

Taking the entire discussion into account, language, rhythm and melodic (or harmonic) contour have all been cited as some of the features one could access to distinguish a specific melody from another as far as continents are concerned. It goes without declaring that other features could be observed by other analysts or observers. However, it has been mentioned continuously that to my mind, borrowing in music is not lawbreaking. Consequently, I may describe an *African Melody* as an attempt to craft an African piece with a deliberate effort to imitate traditional tunes of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, I admit the subjectivity of the apothegm 'deliberate effort' in the definition. Mereku (1997) and Onyeji (2019) advocate that melody writing in Africa must be based on this type. Dor (2005) describes this as an illustration of indigenous music genres in pre-compositional resources. This is not to say such works (African Melodies) may not contain borrowed materials from other cultures, but to express the thought that the holistic approach is what could be considered in the description. Also, this act of composing African melodies could be detected in an entire composition, or a section or portion of a work, or possibly a mixture of African melody and others interchangeably.

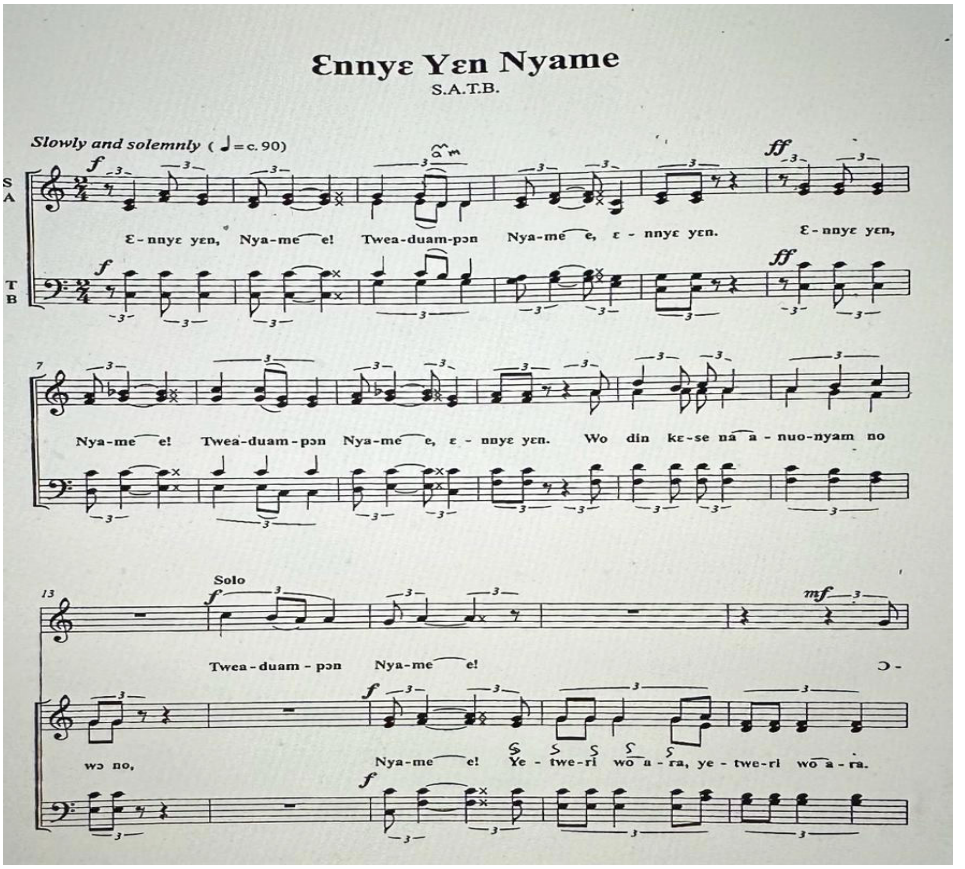
Laryea (2012, p.31) believes that "Amu was especially concerned with what he perceived as the favoring of a Western conception of "development" to the strengthening of local indigenous institutions". As a result, I am tempted to describe the melodic patterns of Amu's *ɛnnyɛ yɛn Nyame* as an *African melody*; Basing my argument on Agawu's interview with Amu who happens to be the father of Ghanaian Art Music, *ɛnnyɛ yɛn Nyame* was crafted by implementing the structures of *Asafo* song (song for war) which is a tradition of the Akan people of Ghana. *In this context, Agawu and Amu (1987) explained Amu's song that aligns with asafo:*

> Then, when you take on *Ɛnnyɛ Yɛn Nyame ee* - this I composed for the consecration of students who finished their course. "Not unto us but unto God, thanks" is the idea in it. On another occasion, I wrote something for their consecration, and it took the form of what we call Asafo song just like war songs [Amu sings.] It is still very effective whenever it is sung. So here, I adapted a particular form as its definite purpose. (p. 56)

In sincerity, Amu never stated the technical processes he employed in the composition during the interview with Agawu. Also, he never specified the features (whether melodic, harmonic, rhythmic sonorities or textual) of the work that results in the appearance of the structure in *Asafo* music. It is also apparent that *Asafo* song in Amu's time might not have been the same as recent (or vice-

versa). Again, with no disrespect, Amu's understanding of what constitutes the musical characteristics of *Asafo* music was never stated in the conversation. Therefore, it may not be mistaken for one to conclude or disagree with Amu's assertion. Yet, even without his description or declaration of inspiration, critically noticing the melodic pattern, it is obvious that the composer makes an intended effort to apply Sub-Saharan African traditional idioms in the music. Some of these idioms in the melodic progression include persistent scoops or glide which is very common in African music, Speech melody, the persistent use of the reduced 7th of Chord 1 in the third phrase, occasional long breaks or silences as postulated by Addaquay (2023a, p. 29) which are all characteristics of traditional African songs.

In this work, Amu makes a deliberate decision to exclude the appearance of any sort of accompaniment, because of the harmonic configuration. Mentioning harmonic configuration is to signify that Amu would only love to include an accompaniment when there is no source of harmonic material. Therefore, his solo works (vocal) may include piano accompaniment. In this case, *ɛnnyɛ yɛn Nyame* as discussed may not need an accompaniment for its authenticity and the novelty. This is also because, Asafo songs are never accompanied with a Western instrument. Nevertheless, since the Piano is a percussive instrument, it could accompany (softly if possible) if there is a choice. From my point of view as an analyst, Strings, organ, to mention a few may not need to accompany such a work. The score of the work is as follows.



Excerpt 2: Illustrating Amu's harmonic configuration

Though out of context, for same reasons, it may be inappropriate to include accompaniment in traditional songs in any sort of gathering (church, festivals, etc.,) by a western instrument (my opinion) for it takes out the novelty or authenticity of such works. For instance, the organ trying to accompany *Ebibindwom*. I am very much aware that posterity may decide whether there could be a western accompaniment or not.

Besides the accompaniment, techniques of Western practices such as persistent use of vibrato (mostly employed by classical soloists and occasionally some Western choirs), overemphasis on legato, and probably exaggeration in dynamics (volume control) as executed in romantic music (western) may not be very essential in the rendition of works such as *ɛnnyɛ yɛn Nyame* since the inspiration of the work (from Asafo songs), the structure of the entire music does not call for such practices.

Nonetheless, the techniques mentioned could be present occasionally for a change of colour or variety in the rendition of the music. Not losing sight of the fact that the work is intercultural (especially in the harmonic and few melodic progressions), one could be mindful of *Proportionism* (created in this paper) in the singing of harmony and few dynamics in the approach. *Proportionism* here differs from blending which requires all singers to sound like one. In this article, *proportionism* refers to the order of volume control in various parts; Due to the fact that Sopranos in a music like *ɛnnyɛ yɛn Nyame* establishes the main melody, and therefore it would be compulsory to hear the voice of the part (soprano) louder and prominent as compared to all other parts. Of course, the bass part which provides the solid root of the harmony follows, tenor follows and alto the softest because of the tendency to compete with sopranos as far as density in volume is concerned. Tenors could also distort the melodic progression of the soprano part when they are so loud above a particular limit.

In addition, to differentiate the soloist from the choir or in singing of solo works in African Melody, there could be few exaggerated expressions with caution not to westernize the act by overstressing the techniques mentioned. Certainly, soloists may also have the liberty to improvise as in the practice of many cultures in the world. As a caution, this improvisation must be done with extreme care by studying the work and adding the appropriate African embellishments or occasionally few other idioms of other cultures.

Nevertheless, there are few exceptions to this rule. First of all, for variety and change of colour, specific stanzas or portions of the music could be established in diverse ways as far as proportionism is concerned. Another exception to this rule is the presence of a soloist singing on top of a choir. In this respect, when the soloist tends to sing notes approximately close or same as the main melodic pattern, the soprano may not need to be too loud above all parts since the soloist doubles the melody. Otherwise, in call-and-response, the soprano may need to play their role as stated above. Thirdly, I am very much conscious that the presence of bad hall acoustics with poor sound quality may be challenging for singers to sing comfortably (consciously or unconsciously) with proper blend of parts. In this respect, bad acoustics refers to a room with background noise, or simply a dead room with inappropriate microphone technique for singers. Here, choristers could make the attempt to blend with the right proportionism as mentioned, yet the mixing on the board by the sound engineer/technician may be incorrect, or the background noise has the potential of distorting the blend or simply, the dead room with weak or no microphones may require singers to

execute the music very loud to enable everyone in the room hear them sing. In such an instance, the loudness of the choir or the poor mixing on the board by the sound engineer/technician may cause imbalance of parts in both blend and proportionism. Works in the same system as *ɛnnyɛ yɛn Nyame* include Nketia's *Nkyirimma nyɛ bi*, Nayo's *Aseye nedi kplɛ dzidzɔ,* Bediako's *Aman mmɛ hwɛ*, to mention a few.

Needless to say, the point by Onyeji (2019) that states 'it is through the composition of African art music that captures the distinctive features of authentic African indigenous music as well as the application of Africa's music theory,' is questionable for the generalization of the statement. Disagreement here does not imply that Onyeji is completely wrong as much as he's not entirely right (in my opinion). This is because the classification about to be discussed does not introduce authentic African indigenous music nor the application of Africa music theory, yet under the umbrella of African Art Music.

African Intercultural Melody which is initiated in this article includes two categories. The first will be discussed, and the second will follow respectively. In the first kind, with the exception of the text, the melodic and rhythmic configuration may not include idioms of African music. Though Merriam (1959) declares that according to Waterman, one of the most common qualities of melodic patterns in Africa is the use of syncopations or shifted accents, this category may not be interested in implementing or imitating the melodic and rhythmic patterns such as syncopations of traditional music of Africa. Examples in this category include Ammisah's *Kyirié* in the Mass of St. Martha in the Fante language, Johnson's *wɔn hyɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* also in mfantse and Armaah's *Dɔfo bɛn* and *ɔdɔ bɛn ni*, all in the Asante Twi language, spoken amongst the people of Ashanti region in Ghana. One may want to inquire or know the account for the inability of such works to be crafted in a typical style of African music as Onjeji, Mereku and Amu advocate.

Lu (2004) seems to be correct if he states that the issue of inheriting a compositional tradition is complex for the contemporary African composer; In this circumstance, I may want to extend the word contemporary by Lu to the other meaning which is a composer that belongs to a particular period with another. What is more, in the Republic of Ghana, it is not very usual to see contemporary composers emulating the practices of the ancient or colleagues (contemporaries). For this reason, the wide spectrum of variety in African Art Music is less discussed for some scholars (as mentioned above) keep

advocating for a specific system in which African Art Music must be expressed. In this regard, I am very sorry, but no one could ever control how music must be expressed, whether this assertion is recognized or not. In consequence, I concur with the proclamation that composition as the scope of musical activity is mostly associated to creativeness (Webster, 2002; Hickey, 2003; Barrett, 2003; Girdzijauskienė, 2004; Sawyer, 2006; Running, 2008,). This is to say that concerning a creative work, one could raise an opinion, yet the decision and choice is implemented by the creators of the art.

To give an idea of the discussion, Essilfie and Sekyi Baidoo's music is definitely not a continuation of the late practices of Amu. As a matter of course, compositions of few older generations could be of influence to the young as well, such as Amu's influence on the choral writings of Nketia. In my interaction with Nketia during my student years in 2008, it became evident that he had encountered Amu back in 1940, establishing the foundation for a mentorship relationship from the outset. The insights he shared with me included the following:

> *Amu never really taught people and therefore, he never explained what he was doing. But I was close to him, you see, and that is a big difference. Because, when I met him, his first words to me were to make sure I do not copy his music, and the second thing was to go to traditional people and learn.*

In the same regard, a Ghanaian Art musician, A.E. Amankwaah's influence on the music of Sekyi Baidoo and Asare- Bediako, and then Essilfie and Annan's influence on the music of Armaah and Asiamah is evident. Yet, the decision of mentees in the country is rather individualistic and not nationalistic. To give an idea, with regards to speech melody in Ghanaian Art music after being conscious of his identity as an African, as Agawu and Amu (1987) positioned:

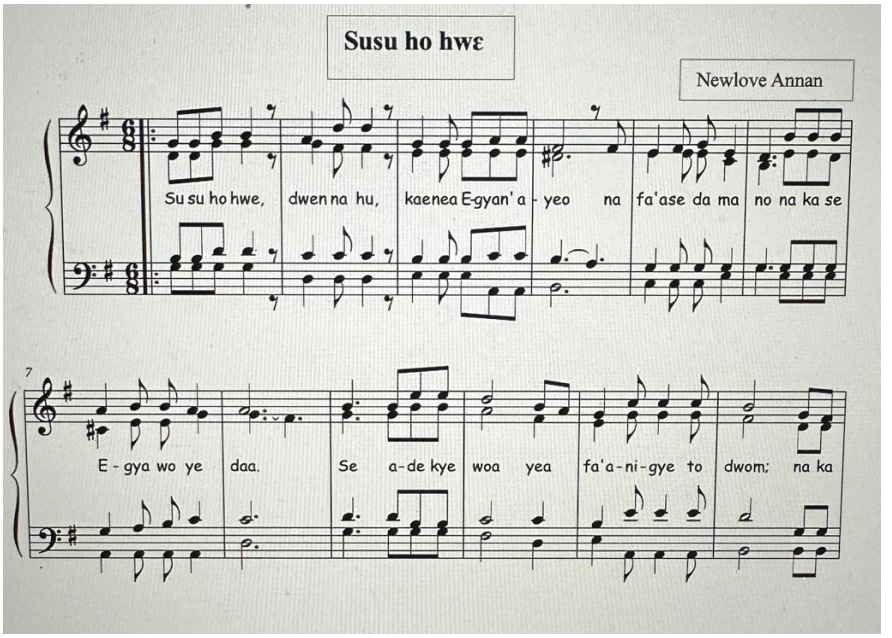
> So, as I say, I observe this rule very strictly. There is a composer in the Ga language, one called Thompson, who observes these rules, and among those who write in Twi, the one I know who follows my pattern strictly is Professor [Kwabena] Nketia. Others ignore this rule, but I will not, and I will never ignore these rules. (p.57)

For this reason, the works from generations to generations may not be studied as musical development (which is subjective) but rather generational demarcation from an era to another as Amuah (2012) averred. The conclusion that could be

drawn from the discussions above is musical features of a particular generation in Ghana may not necessarily be described as an improvement of the past, but rather musical practices of a specific generation; Of course, by and large, the term improvement or development here could be idiosyncratic; For instance, one could describe the chromaticism in the approach of new compositions as an improvement on the past, or one could simply state that the number of composers in Ghana have rather increased compared to ancient days, which is also an act of development. Also, who knows, another generation in the future could simply group Amu's and current generation as one, depending on the development of music in newer generation.

Furthermore, with regards to the rendition of such pieces in singing, it will not be in the wrong direction to apply techniques of western music such as breathing after each phrase or taking in deep breath before a long phrase, focusing on the Vocal cords by preventing excessive air through it, the application of purposeful volume control (dynamics), a slight employment of vibrato and a delayed vibrato on long notes, using appropriate resonances for the appropriate registers and the proper technique for both high and low registers. For instance, apart from the use of breathing and focusing the vocal cord, crescendo could be applied on the first two phrases of Armaah's *Dɔfo bɛn*, followed by a soft tone in the third phrase. Also, the first 14 bars of Amissah's *Kyirié* may demand *crescendo*, and bars 28 to 32 may demand decrescendo after another crescendo from 17 to 27. Again, Amu's *Hadzidzi amɛ ʃɛ gbɔgbɔ* could also be tackled in the practice of the baroque era in western music. Obviously, this calls for such techniques because the works involved are western in style if language is subtracted. Articulation of text has not been mentioned since it is the next broad topic of discussion.

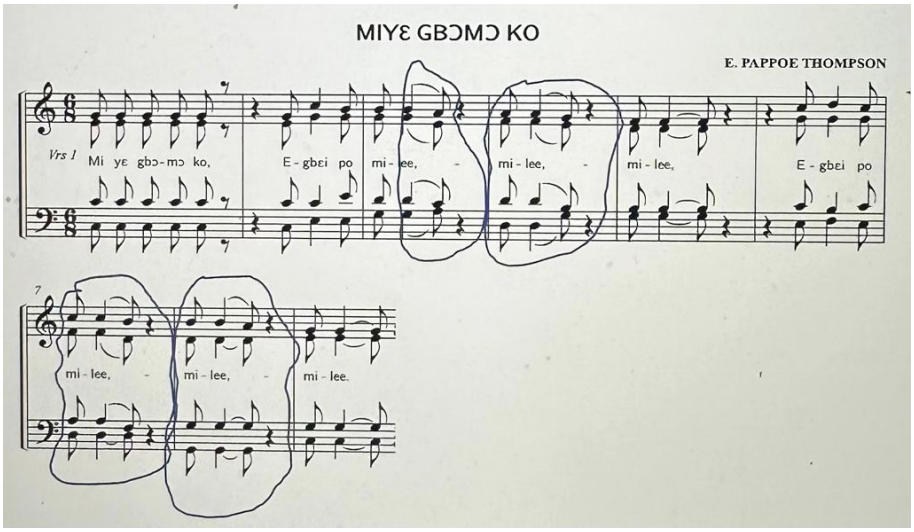
In the next category of African intercultural melodic passages, the composition could be executed in an African language, with the employment of rhythmic patterns in African music, yet depart from the patterns of traditional music in melodic qualities. In the beginning of Annan's *Susu ho hwɛ*, though the application of speech melody is present as Amu advises, there is a deliberate pattern that follows the chordal progressions of Pachebel's canon in D.



Excerpt 3: Illustrating chordal progressions of Pachebel's Canon in D

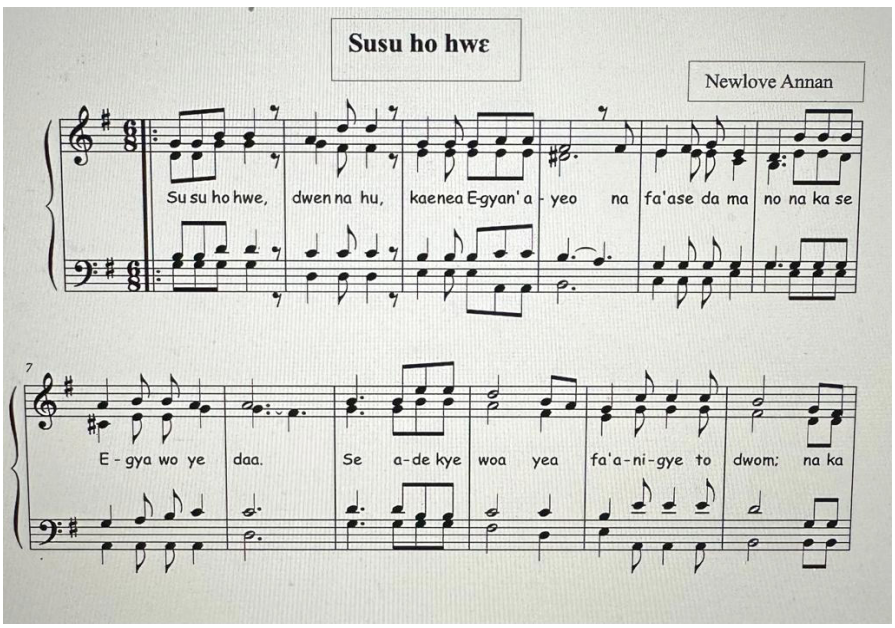
This approach does not allow one to apply modes or patterns of traditional music of Africa. Other compositions in this respect include Essilfie's *Mɔbɔ me nsanku daa,* (See Addaquay 2023b), Sekyi Baidoo's *Halleluia, Nyame dzi hen,* Bediako's *Hyira me,* Thompson's *Miyɛ Gbɔmɔ ko,* etc. This is to state that though these compositions do not really ignore the rhythmic patterns of Africa, the melodic patterns may follow a western-like progression or a specific progression in the work of a westerner or any other culture.

In the singing of such a melody, it is not out of the way to apply practices of techniques such as the interpretation of slurs on the melisma (popularly known in Ghana as open and close in dynamics) which have been circled on the score below.



Excerpt 4: Illustrating interpretation of slurs and melisma

As vibrato has become a skill that contemporary singers (youth choirs) in Ghana would desire to emulate in choral works recently, it could be useful on long notes of such works as circled in the next excerpt.



Excerpt 5: Illustrating effect of vibrato singing

For vibrato has been mentioned here, it is worth noting that the singing of excessive vibrato (occasionally accompanied by legato in slow music) in the tone of Ghanaian youth choirs was initiated by the pioneer of youth choirs in Ghana, named the 'Winneba Youth Choir' (Amuah, 2013, Arkust, 2012). This is the tone that identified this group and was part of the reasons for gaining fame in the late 90's to 2000s. This practice was admired by the younger youth choirs who imitated Winneba Youth Choir as they were formed. In this respect, youth choirs such as Harmonious Chorale (Amuah, 2013), Gramophone Chorus, Vocal Essence Choral, and many other youth choirs mimicked this admirable practice.

To be factual, this practice has been embraced and accepted (indirectly) by choral lovers in Ghana to an extent that it has become a standard tone that distinguishes most Ghanaian youth choirs from others. Yet, church choirs (apart from some youth choirs and very few other choirs in churches) and few institutional choirs are not convinced in mimicking this act, as much as they do admire the achievements of these youth choirs, for they believe in the authenticity of Ghanaian choral singing as was instructed by great choirmasters in the past. For this reason, it may be difficult to find church choirs in Ghana imitating youth choirs outside the church. Yet, within the church choirs, there are extended choirs created for choral competitions and special gatherings such as the circuit and Diocesan choirs and Singing bands of the Methodist church, Ghana. The tone of choirs for these choral competitions is also not based on the practice of these youth choirs, but more aggressive in volume, dynamics and energy. This is to say that the practice of excessive vibrato is a modern one. For instance, the tone of singing bands in churches, choirs in the Northern part of Ghana, churches of the Ewe community, and various groups are all distinct in several ways. The variety of choir tones in the country is impeccable and commendable that out of the abundance of talents, this is disregarded even when it comes to state functions. This is to say that the variety has been underrated and less enjoyed and discussed.

Nevertheless, as much as vibrato has been embraced by the leading choirs in Ghana (the youth choirs), it may be demanding to counsel these choirs to reduce the volume of the practice. I guess that very soon, it may be an ancient practice as choirs keep growing and developing. Yet, I recommend delayed vibrato in the singing of the second category. This is because this category has respected the fact that African language and rhythm in composition is significant. Consequently, to compliment this act, excessive vibrato on short notes could distort the clarity of notes, for the majority may appreciate, yet, the

majority may not always be right, or in other words, majority may also embrace a new approach to singing in African intercultural melodic patterns. Therefore, in the singing of such works, I may recommend a delayed vibrato (as stated previously) on longer notes (i.e., beginning with a straight tone, followed later on by the wavy tone) as discussed by Howard and Austin (1989).

Yet, other choirs that do not believe so much in the practice of excessive vibrato, could apply crescendo (not an exaggerated one though), or any other technique that could be suitable for long notes. As the conductor may prefer, appropriate dynamics may be necessary for the rendition of the music. In summary, the rule here is the more intercultural idiom in the music, the more intercultural in approach and vice-versa. Essentially, one may be correct to argue that once there is an African melody, there could be an African harmony. Again, once there is an African Intercultural melody, there could also be an African Intercultural harmony. As it has already occurred, harmony has not been labelled in this article as it has been done to melody; This is because, the harmonic progression of African Art music follows a particular system of rule in western music and other cultures. Although Amu, Bankole of Nigeria and few other composers pull out all the stops to avoid harmonic cadences and standard western harmonic practices in their music, the correct arrangement of lines and system follow the method of western music irrespective of the effort.

Yet, there is no doubt that several harmonic applications in African Art Music are really evident and heard in traditional music as well. In agreement with this point, Amu declared in the interview with Agawu that he studied western music, yet he was conscious of the intervals and cadences in his works after researching and notating songs from a number of African traditional singers. Here, Amu states that he is conscious to an extent that his harmonic sonorities are not so dissimilar to that of traditional music. For instance, the harmonic structure from the opening phrases of *Monkamfo no* by Nketia could be described as African harmony. Also, some progressions may be common amongst a particular group of people with the result that those progressions could be associated to such groups or states. An example is the harmonic progression of '*Yaa Amponsah*' (see Braddock, 2020; Kaye, 1999; Collins, 1994/ 1976). Another instance is the call-and-response in the refrain of *Yɛn Ara Asase Ni* which is considered by Nketia (1974) and Agawu (2016) as a primary characteristic of African vocal music. Nevertheless, that may be another topic for discussion in future. All things considered, I am not tempted to label harmonic structures of African Vocal Art Music since to my mind, the choice of patterns of a specific melody suggests the

harmonic progressions to creators of music. In other words, I strongly believe that it is the melody that proposes the harmony. So, an African melody may automatically suggest an African harmony and so with harmonic approach to African Intercultural Melody (my thoughts).

3. **Articulation in African Art Music**

The noticeable point appears to be that pronunciation of words or articulation of vowels and consonants could be generational (i.e., the era in which a person was born) or dependent on a lot of factors such as environmental (could be migration or exactly where one resides, movement from one place to the other, etc.,), social (the kind of people a person may be surrounded by, etc.), and lot of influences one could conceptualize. Considering all the causes mentioned, Ghanaian composers may apply both code switching and code mixing in compositions of vocal pieces. Scholars that have attempted to define both code switching and code mixing include Amuda (1989), Atoye (1994) and Belly (1976). This tradition has been rampant amongst current composers and music performers. Code switching in Choral music as described by Amuah and Wuaku (2021) may not be of much concern to language and individuals that have studied a specific language comprehensively but code mixing. Code switching which is the act of changing an entire language to another is different from code mixing which is the act of mixing two or more languages interchangeably in speech or singing.

Current composers such as Sekyi-Baidoo and in Gospel music of Ghana, Rev. Thomas Harry Yawson (that composes for *Tagoe Sisters*) who mentioned to me that at times, they intentionally incorporate code mixing in their music, as certain melodic patterns align well with particular languages. Therefore, in the compositions, they could mix the Asante Twi and any other Akan language like Fante or others at any point in time. Evidence points to Armaah's composition titled *Oye* which could mean She/he/it is good. It could also be translated as '*it is enough*'. The title which is the main theme that makes the composition interesting for the Ghanaian public is in the Fante language. The rest of the text is in the Asante twi. This code mixing was brilliantly executed in such a way that it has not been recognized. As much as I may find this craft as a creative and inoffensive one, others may have few concerns. Some may consider this craft as distortion of a particular language, while others may also think that the text of music could either employ deliberate code switching (as the case of Annan's 'Your grace and mercy') or monolingual (as in the case of Nketia's *Nkyirimma nyɛ*

bi). However, has code mixing come to stay? Does one really have control over languages? This question is raised here for the current generation is acquainted with code mixing in both speech and singing. As far as singing is concerned, is it the influence on the works of current generation of composers that causes singers to apply the technique consciously or unconsciously, or the singers would want to do so because of the employment of the practice in speech even if the composition does not involve the system?

Aside from the fact that in current years, most youth choirs may love to exaggerate in articulating plosives like 't', fricatives (almost all) and digraphs such as 'ch' , 'ph' and 'sh', these singers may also approach articulation of vowels, consonants and few pronunciations in the western system. There are various reasons for this account; To start with, one must not disremember that Ghana has been a multilingual country for a very long time. Consequently, this act of code mixing is not a modern practice, yet the current generation has really implemented this system in speech because of various reasons as mentioned.

However, it has gradually become prestigious to be able to sing within this scheme especially amongst the youth. Furthermore, another argument one may raise is that communicative competence of current generation in the L1 which is their native language is either lower or as same as the L2 which is the second language. This is why on analysis and further study, Blanc and Hamers (2000) opines that 'Code-mixing' and 'code-switcing' were considered as signs of incompetence. Meanwhile, scholars such as, Kohnert, et el (2005) also state that an alternative view is to recognize the cultural, social, and communicative validity of the mixing of two traditionally isolated linguistic codes as a third legitimate code. The accountability given by this paper is not to determine whether code mixing is blameless or vice-versa but to report occurrences in current singing.

Since code mixing has become established is speech, singing and composition, there are few proposals here. As a matter of fact, communication of text in singing must be very transparent for audience to capture the text even without the use of a projector for this is African music in discussion. Of course, in Western Art Music and few other cultures, the application of certain techniques in resonances may not assist one to be heard clearly in singing. Nevertheless, articulation in high registers would be very challenging to execute in both Western and African Art singing, yet as much as one could, the text must be very clear. Audience must not struggle to hear the text of singers. Directors of the music and singers may

have to consume some time on the right pronunciation of text in music to an extent that even in the presence of inaccuracy in construction of text, or code mixing by composers, the thematic concept is well understood by the audience and mediocrity does not play role in performances. If there is a possibility of para-phrasing, composers could be notified for such an act to take place. Singers must understand the text in detail and act the text out in their rendition to enable listeners to enjoy the music with understanding. Moreover, the system of exaggeration in articulation as mentioned above could be reduced in the rendition of African melodic and harmonic passages as defined in this paper.

4. **Dynamics and Emotions in African Art Music**

Though, this statement may not be entirely the truth in all cases, I agree partly with Kivy (1980) and Davies (1994) for concurring that the expressiveness of music is in the music itself. For example, works like Annan's *ɔkyɛsɔ Nyame*, Armaah's *Debonyɛni* and *ɔdɔ bɛn ni* Sekyi-Baidoo's *Nya abotar,* Osei Boateng's *Yesu Ka wo ho*, and Bediako's *Ka kyerɛ Yesu* suggest a contemplative singing that comforts the listener even without the understanding of the text. Without a doubt, this suggests the singing to be expressive. Yet I believe that this statement by Kivy and Davies may be very personal because works like *Yɛyi wo ayɛ* by Amankwaah and *Monkamfo no* by Nketia are all songs of praise to (the Christian) God which needs a bit of expression by the singers to bring out the meaning, because the craft of these works do not suggest the act of showering praises as it is done in Africa. This is to say not every work is self-explanatory in emotions. For this reason, singers need to comprehend a certain work for the appropriateness of singing in African Art Music.

However, there could be mood swings in a particular composition which may suggest a particular interpretation. Conductors, choruses and soloists may have to be critical in the presence of mood swing. This mood swing discussed could be textual or musical. To give an idea, the change of mode in bar 20 of Amu's *Hadzidzi Amɛ ʃɛ Gbɔgbɔ* is both textual and musical. Therefore, this I would love to term as *Textual and Musical Mood Swing*. The beginning of *Hadzidzi Amɛ ʃɛ Gbɔgbɔ* which expresses the benefits of singing by lifting the souls of humans, and describing greatness in singing as well, were all done in the key of F major. The key changes to its relative minor when the persona starts describing music as an expression for relaxation and a comforter for mourners. The music gradually comes back to F major when the persona speaks about singing serving as strength for warriors. Here the work of the conductor is very easy because the

composer paints the music appropriately (from my lens). Here the music could be softer, smoother, or better still give an idea of the change of mood for in various ways must be respected by conductors, singer(s) and accompanists.

In the second section of Asare- Bediako's music entitled *Aw'rade Nyame yɛ ɔdɔ*, the change of mode from A major to its relative minor (F# min.) is kept away from the textual change of mood but musical beauty. This would also been termed in this paper as *Musical Mood Swing;* The same group of text that advices Christians to love ourselves was changed from a major to a minor mode. Here, I suggest a change of interpretation just because of the musical mood swing. There could be legato and open and close in dynamics or any other musical interpretation preferred by the conductor, depending on the circumstance. For instance, when there is dancing attached to the rendition, from loud to soft tones may or not work accurately, subject to the atmosphere.

Definitely, *Textual Mood Swing* here will be defined as a composition in which the composer considers a change of mood in the text and not the music. James Varrick Armaah's *wo yɛ Nyame* is an example. After stating in the first few bars that (the Christian) God is a good friend of love, and also a God that does not slumber nor sleep in the key of E flat major, Armaah decides to mention challenges of life, poverty, and struggles of life still in the same key, and never introduces chromaticism or any kind of suggestive musical mood to compliment the text. In such an instance, the concentration of the composer is on the sequences from one struggle to another and not the musical mood swing. One could still argue that the sequences could also be the composer's way of applying musical mood swing. Because, he mentions again that in darkness, light or in the midst of the storm, God will still be with us. And there, he introduced another sequence. That could be another way of musical mood though, nonetheless the mentioning of struggles in life and darkness may be well established with change of mode or introduction of chromaticism or other suggestive musical mood swings to paint the text with deep understanding. As much as this is an opinion and very prejudiced, I would still like to term such as *Textual Mood Swing*. The second section of Bediako's *Ka ma Obiara nte* is another example; After advocating that Christians should tell it out of the Goodness of God, the second section that speaks about the struggles of life was concentrated on textual mood swing rather than musical. This is not to state that these composers are incorrect, but to report exactly how the music speaks. Consequently, the conductor or performer could do very little to bring out the musical mood swing in textual mood swing.

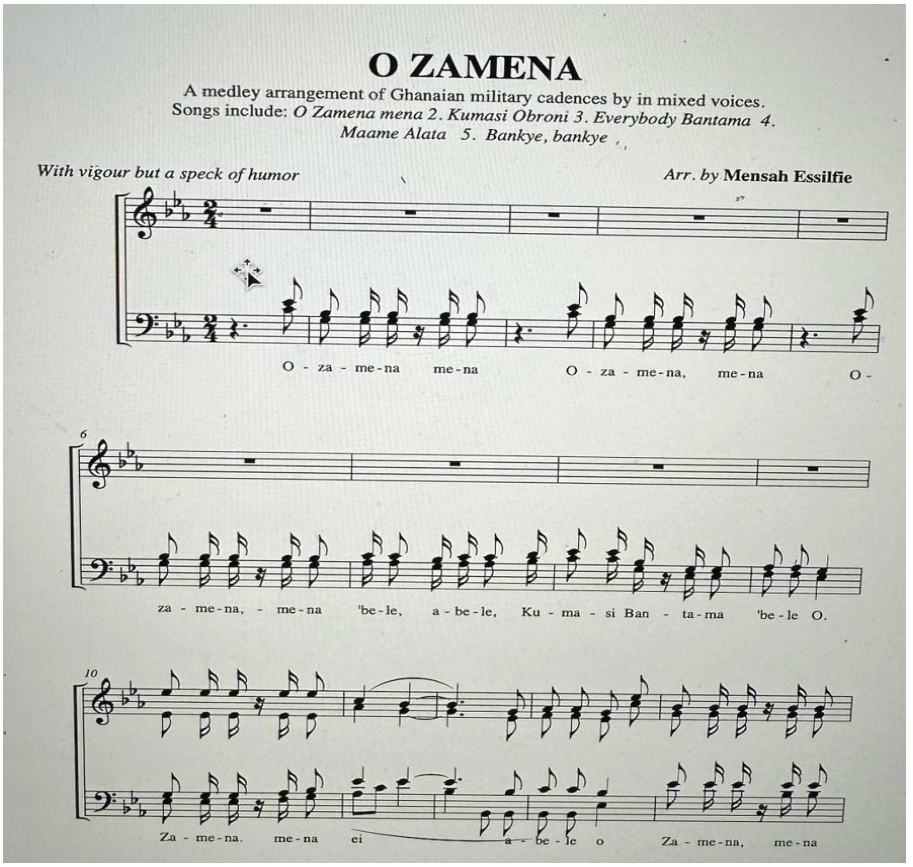
With the exception of mood swing mentioned, the conductor may introduce dynamics at appropriate sections of the music when it calls for it. The phrase 'when it calls for it' becomes ambiguous and meaningless if detailed explanation is not executed. For example, some of the late works of Amu, that decides to inculcate more of traditional musical elements of Africa, may not need exaggeration in expression. For this reason, Amu, Nketia, Nayo, Thompson and many other great composers are reluctant to include dynamics or accents on their music, for exaggeration in these components disposes the authenticity.

Certainly, sequences and free counterpoints may need few expressions. Yet, works of Mensah Essilfie, James Armaah, Sekyi-Baidoo, Yaw Asiamah, and few others may need some expressivity for the musical hybridity and interculturalism in their compositions are very high. Expressivity here refers to dynamics and appropriate tones. Yet, at any point in time that any composer (ancient or modern) decides to write in a precise style, there must be justice in the rendition as far as interpretation of the music is concerned. For instance, one could not interpret works that Amu wrote in the style of western music as a pure African art work all because the music comes from Amu. The discussion or the concept here is the style of the composition and not the composer.

5. **Some Other Arrangements**

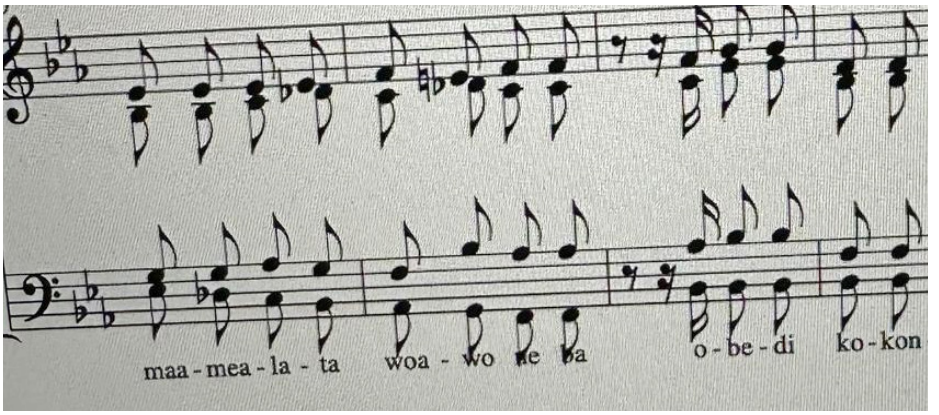
Another point that must be noted here is that despite the mentioning of DOs and DONTs in this paper, any of the suggested rules could be flouted, but must be done artistically. And as far as the discussion here is Art music and not traditional music of Africa, borrowing of few techniques could still be achieved, once it does not change the style and intentions of the composition. The proposed instructions in this article mentions original compositions without arrangements. Meanwhile, it could be advised here that a particular music (whether folk, art, popular, etc.) could be arranged by a composer or an arranger in an entirely different style which may interchange the music from its authenticity. Essilfie's arrangement of folk tunes may still involve chromaticism or Western harmonic approach which may call for a rendition in the style of another. In this case, one considers the entire output of the music and performs accordingly. Also, some arrangements may be sectional and some sections may call for a particular style. For instance, the beginning of the arrangement of the military song of victory entitled O *Zamena mina* may need a military tone, rather than a typical choral art tone. If an arrangement must be done with a different approach of singing, it must be holistic and taken seriously as an art

of performance and not a mere change of interpretation of the original work.



Excerpt 6: Illustrating text-tone relationship

Yet, if such a music has different sections with different approach, such as bar 130 to 133, the rendition could change to a different tone, probably slight *legato* and *crescendo* or any other. Accompaniment in the music must suggest Africanism for such works (named as *Jama*) are mostly unaccompanied, however, if there must be an introduction of accompaniment, the selected tones could be Piano, Xylophone, Flute that could sound as close to the local, and any other suggestive African instrument. The choice of drums and rhythmic pattern must also suggest same, no matter how the choir makes an effort to sound African, accompaniment could distort the act.



Excerpt 7: Illustrating use of tones for accompaniment

6. **Conclusions**

Noticeably, one of the most substantial characteristics of African music which has never been mentioned here is danceable music in African Art Music. In actuality, danceable music in vocal art music (especially the ones popularly known as highlifes) have been exempted in the rules of this discussion, for it contains its own rules, since it is participatory and also for entertainment.

Therefore, the proposition guidelines in this paper are precisely for art music that falls under the definition given by Owusu-Ansah and Acquah (2020). They state that 'the term art music – or sometimes fine art music – is used for convenience of reference for music designed for intent listening or presentation as "concert" music, music in which expression of feeling is combined with a high level of craftsmanship and a sense of beauty. It must also be noted as well that Compositions in the style of Western music as described in the first category of Euba's concept of Interculturalism is deliberately exempted in the discussion for such works could always rely on the several vocal techniques in Western music. Again, phrasing has not been mentioned. Probably one could consider the concept of word-based phraseology as the standard of phrasing in African Art Music as raised by Addaquay (2022).

Concerning singing in traditional music of Africa, for expressivity, 'the higher the note, the louder the music'. Yet, in Western classical music, the higher the note (especially in slow music) the softer it becomes, probably followed by crescendo if it's done on a very long note. Since the discussion here is Art music and not traditional music, it may be advised that works that are written in the melodic

configurations of African intercultural melody may need to adopt this system occasionally (soft tone for high registers) for a change of color. I am very much aware that 'the higher the note, the louder the music' concept has become part and parcel of Africans. One may ask that 'don't you think Western art music singers used to sing louder on their high tones, and changed the practice as technology was enhanced and audience were quiet at concerts?' Yes, probably we might get there or not. Culturally, there is no way an African will sing high registers (i.e., after singing low registers for a while) in soft tones. In art music, this could be introduced as variety for a start and later, it may be the practice or not.

To state this point emphatically, it is not mistaken to mention that Art music in Africa is so extensive because of the borrowing involved. From my point of view, under no circumstance must an authority limit an art musician in the style he/she craves to scrounge with extravagant ideas that could be implemented for the diversity and inspiration from various composers. To put it in another way, African Art music composers must be given the liberty to explore in any style they wish to. As much as suggestions could be made, there must not be strict rules to limit composers as in how far they want their music to grow. Composers also have the liberty to introduce new styles of writing and approach to music for this is where we could have extensive discussions on the subject. If they don't compose, we have nothing to write. All in all, this article might not have mentioned all techniques appropriate for the singing of African Vocal Art music, yet the arguments, disagreements, confrontations and the significance may serve as continuation of further deliberations of singing in the style of African Art music.

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