An Appraisal of the Works of Professor Samuel Olufemi Adedeji: An Icon in Nigerian Gospel Music and Production

By

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Abstract
Professor Samuel Olufemi Adedeji popularly known as ‘Femi Adedeji whose contributions to African Musicology both in Religious and Gospel music has been enormous. His involvement in researches on theoretical, theological and stylistic dimension of Nigeria church and gospel music has constituted a wide spectrum of musical genres in music scholarship. This paper appraised the contribution of Professor ‘Femi Adedeji as humanistic scholar, his definitive and creative interpretation of gospel music. The paper analyzes ‘Ona Abayo Da’ (2 tracks) of his gospel music production. Relevant literary materials were sought to buttress the various points including the researcher’s personal encounter with Professor ‘Femi Adedeji as a student, supervisee and external examiner. The paper found that Professor ‘Femi Adedeji scholarly works in Religious/Gospel music vis-a-vis music production are rich in scope and content. His contributions to the development of the field of African musicology are immense. The quality of researches and music produced by this great and erudite scholar are highlighted.

Preamble
The author’s personal encounter with Professor Femi Adedeji dates back to 2004 during her post-graduate studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. It was the same year Prof. Adedeji got his Doctorate degree at U.I, Ibadan. The author was assigned to him as a supervisor during her Master’s degree programme and that was when a close interaction with him started. Professor ‘Femi Adadeji was my teacher,
counselor, spiritual father and a confidant. His vast knowledge and encouragement had propelled the author to publish her first article in Nigeria Music Review in 2008, which was the beginning of her research publications. Prof. ‘Femi Adadeji is constructive in his criticism, articulate in whatever contributions he presents, he is a motivational teacher, a critical reviewer, and a valuable university scholar. He was the author external examiner during her Ph.D. oral defense. Little did I know that my external examiner is going to be Professor ‘Femi Adadeji. His prayers and encouragement since the author made encounter with him, cannot be quantified.

Introduction

Professor ‘Femi Adedeji is blessed with a humble, beautiful and God fearing wifeand the marriage is rewarded with five lovely children. He is a father, mentor with high intellectual prowess, and a gentle reverend in the Lord who has concern for others. He is an erudite professor whose vision
and administrative skill is excellent. He does not rebuke but corrects, advises and counsels whoever that comes in contact with him.

Professor ‘Femi Adedeji has graduated nine (9) master students, four (4) Ph.D. candidates, three (3) Doctor of Music Arts (D.MA) in Church Music and three (3) Master in church music (MCM). However, his major contribution in tertiary institution is felt more not only in his institution (OAU) but outside. For instance, at the Delta State University, Abraka, he has served as external examiner for post-graduate students from 2010 till date. He had contributed immensely to the growth and development of both staff and students as an external examiner and as the immediate past President of Association of Nigeria Musicologist (ANIM). Apart from ANIM, he is a member of other folk wing professional bodies such as; Conference of Music Education of Nigeria, Centre for Black Music Research, Chicago, International Society of Musical Arts Education (PASMAE); Gospel Musicians Association of Nigeria and Copyright Society of Nigeria.

**Brief history of gospel music**

Gospel music is a genre of Christian music. The creation, performance, significance and even the definition of gospel music varies according to culture and social context. Gospel music is composed and performed for many purposes, including aesthetic pleasure, religious or ceremonial purposes, and as an entertainment product for the market place Gospel music usually has dominant vocals (often with strong use of harmony with Christian lyrics. Gospel music can be traced back to the early 17th century, the black oral tradition. Hymns and sacred songs were often repeated in a call and response fashion. According to Kaezor (2015) the first published use of the term “gospel song” probably appeared in 1874. Gospel music publishing houses emerged and the advent of radio in the 1920s greatly increased the audience for gospel music.
However, the gospel genre originated from a fusion of traditional Christian hymns as performed by church choirs. Kaezor (2015) posited that Christian music in Nigeria was first introduced in the 16th century by Portuguese catholic missionaries to Benin and Warri through a rudimentary form of Portuguese liturgical music during the early evangelization of those kingdoms between 1485 and 1600. The pioneer of a uniquely Nigerian variant of choral music was the Reverend Josiah J. Ransome-Kuti who began experimenting with the fusion of choral music with Yoruba language and melodic structures. He composed choral pieces, as church organist of the St. Peters Church, Abeokuta, embodying the language and style of the Yoruba people. His work was so organized that he was invited to the United Kingdom in 1922 to record an album of these compositions on the Zanophone label. Ransom-Kuti (grand-father of FelaAnikulapo-Kuti) can thus be said to be the father of Nigerian gospel music as far as Christian hymnal music and other genres. (Kaezor, 2015).

**Professor ‘Femi Adedeji Definitive and Creative Interpretation of Gospel Music**

Professor ‘Femi Adedeji has made a critical contribution on the definition of gospel music. In his article ‘Definitive and Conceptual Issues in Nigeria Gospel Music’, Adedeji (2001) criticized various definitions of gospel music written by scholars, given a distinctive interpretation of their clear meanings. In his analysis of these definitions, he reported that J.S. Robert was the foremost writer to give popular definition of gospel music as follows: gospel music is the ‘music that is addressed to the people as an expression of personal testimony’ (Robert in Adedeji, 2001:47). In Adedeji’s assessment, the definition given by Robert seems to have removed gospel music from its real owner (which is the church), and from it users (the Christians) since both words are avoided in his definition. Considering this anomalies, Adedeji therefore was not convinced with such definition. He remarked also on Boyer (1979) definition of gospel music that says:
The term gospel music refers to both a type of song and a style of playing the piano. The texts of the songs are based on the Trinity; they speak of blessings, sorrows, woes and lamentations. The piano style is basically chordal and heavily laced with syncopation. (p.22).

According to Adedeji, Boyer’s definition of gospel music is ‘based on American gospel music. He further stressed that his definition “seems to be too narrow by identifying song and piano styles as the only distinctive features of gospel music. Boyer relates gospel music to that type of gospel music that he is familiar with in America. Adedeji’s re-definition although based on the scriptural message of the gospel remains the same (being derived from the Bible), while the musical style and voices varies from one generation or culture to another (200: 46).

‘The term ‘gospel music’ conjures the sound of Sunday Morning worship Oludare and Adekunle (1993:211). They described the music as “a sonorous, organ, rhythmic hand-claps and soul-stirring shouts”. They further state that ‘the messages contained in the text are those of inspiration and salvation’. Adedeji in his critical examination of the above definition has noted that, ‘this definition tends to put too much limitation on the scope of the genre’ (2001:47). The practice of gospel music is far beyond the Sunday morning worship and stirring shorts. Oludare and Adekunle therefore, are relating the definition to their own Nigeria experience of gospel music’ (Adedeji:2001:47). He explained further that the Bible is the word of God, while the musical rendition is the culture of man.

Adegbite (1994) in his own submission in Adedeji’s article saw gospel music as the new type of church music... mostly, found in the public domain; Professor Femi Adedeji applauded the definition given by Adegbite on one condition that, he described gospel music as a type of church music. However, at close examination, the definition sounds
incomplete and has not provided sufficient information on the supposed content of the music. Ojo (1998) provides another definition of gospel music as confirmed by Adedeji which seems to be the most expressive among all the foregoing definitions. Ojo unfold that the term ‘gospel music’ is too sweeping’ (2001:47). He describes gospel music further as ‘a distinct kind of music composed and rendered by men and women who call themselves Christians and to their music as ministration of the Good News in songs’. Adedeji as a gospel music scholar and a theologian has made two remarkable suggestions; first, for gospel music to be gospel, it must be composed and performed by Christians; second, the content of gospel music is suggested to be the message of salvation’ (2001:48). It is in this sense that Kokuyi (1995) described gospel music as “the gospel message delivered through music”.

Considering all the aforementioned definitions, Adedeji summarizes that it is ‘the internal evidence of the music itself and the practitioners’ claim that the purpose of their music as a type of Christian music that primarily aims at preaching the ‘good news’ of Jesus Christ; or simply as ‘gospel message’ sung and played on musical instruments” (2001:48). Adedeji (2009) also defined gospel music viewing it from the global context as:

A Christian music genre originally aimed at propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ but not necessarily limited to it in practice. By content, it contains praise, thanksgiving and adoration of God, admonition, comfort, prayer, entertainment of saints, religious, social and moral values general Christian doctrines and socio-political commentaries (2009: 60).

He suggests that “Nigerian gospel music, in addition to the main gospel messages should be advocate for peace, unity, love, faith in God, good ethics and manners, comfort for the hurting, forgiveness, charity, etc., all of
which are needed in the world” (2009: 61). He advised also that, this task is not only the responsibilities of the Nigerian gospel musicians but all gospel carriers’ throughout the world”.

Adedeji in his conclusion submits that, gospel music should therefore be seen as another brand of Christian music meant for evangelization purposes, whether based and used in the church or not” (2001:48). Adedeji’s definitive and creative interpretation of gospel music has made him a gospel music critic and theologian with the Solomon-kind of wisdom and interpretation.

**Professor Femi Adedeji: A Humanistic Scholar**

Femi Adedeji is a leading humanist: His contributions to scholarship, involvement in improving people’s lives, his concern for the welfare of both staff and students should be commended while he is alive. Abegunde (2016) posits that ‘as a Nigerian, I am bothered by the fact that our heroes are not celebrated until they pass on’. He explained further that ‘inspite of their immense contributions to music, were not appreciated in their life-time’. Today, the story has taken a new dimension. Nigeria musicologists have taken the bull by the horn in appreciating and celebrating their erudite scholars whose academic prowess have made significant impact to music scholarship. From J.H. Kwabena Nketia when he celebrated his eighteenth birthday, to Professor Omibiyi-Obidike, and Professor D.C.C. Agu. This new dimension in the orientation of musicologists to appreciating heroic achievements and good deeds has being a worthy venture in the history of the Association of Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM). The celebration of a scholar according to Igbi (2016) often comes when such scholar has contributed greatly to his profession either through active research on issues that are pertinent to their field of specialty or the various ways the specialist has affected the society with his/her profession.
Adedeji’s research works are of various categories: first, ‘Religious music (the study of Ifa and Christian Music), documented and analyzed both in song form and their performance – practices. He has also opened ways for meaningful comparative musicology on the two musical types. Second, he has extensively researched into the traditional ‘Yoruba hymn’ which is one of the most sacred religious musical forms in Nigeria. Third, ‘Nigeria Gospel Music’ before now however, this area had not received scholarly attention in the Nigerian music scholarship. This aptitude in the field of music scholarship by Professor Femi Adedeji, and his gamut of interest in gospel music genre, has developed and continues to materialize on the various aspects of the genre with a view to systematize the theories that underlie its performance practices. Fourth, he had made huge contributions in the area of theory and composition. He propounded the theory of ‘Theological’ (Bibliological musicology and the theory of Transformative Musicology’. The theological musicological theory is a means of studying various religious music(s) in Africa (Christian, Ifa, Islam, or Hindu). While the transformative musicological theory deals on intercultural music development which will make our musicological studies relevant to the search for global peace, harmony, stability, security of lives while educating the human mind against crimes and other social vices. Lastly, Adedeji’s hard-work and persistent researches as distinguished him as a voice in African Musicology. He has contributed to a wider spectrum of African musicology including documentation, notably, that of pitch/tonality and the notation of African music with computer technology, reference materials for both students and scholars on African music theory such as; metric organization and scales structure in African music, melodic analysis of African music and Harmonic analysis of African Music, and many more.

His contributions to music scholarship have gone beyond the shores of Nigeria and Africa. He had published in reputable journals (local and international). As a prolific writer, he has fifty – four (54) journal articles,
seven (7) in encyclopedia, nine (9) edited books, fourteen (14) contributions to published books, thirteen (13) published creative books, twenty-four selected compositions, thirteen (13) selected hymns and many other articles, including study manuals and creative writing. Many of his papers and works are still in progress. His new discovering of Nigerian gospel music genre as a neglected segment of African musicology including his contributions to this genre and humanity has made Professor Femi Adedeji a humanistic scholar. His versatile knowledge has left its foot prints in the sands of time which motivates many other scholars, individual and the wider society to work assiduously for the betterment of African musicology and the society at large.

**Analysis of Track Two (2) and Eight (8) of OnaAbayo Da: Professor Femi Adedeji Gospel Music Production**

Gospel music in Nigeria has come into a high limelight and the processes, compositional techniques, melodic and harmonic blend, instrumental; accomplishment and production processes are all fused-up to make a better music. There are different types of gospel beats such as reggae, pop, hip-hop, rock, etc. and others which are evident in the gospel ‘Femi’ album. Adedeji’s gospel musical album “OnaAbayo Da” (the way forward) featuring his personal compositions. ‘Femi Adedeji gospel musical album Ona Abayo Da has eight (8) tracks and was produced in 1992. Track 4 titled; what manner of man is Jesus? And track 8 titled; Jesus shall reign would be analyzed with necessary musical examples. The objective of this is to provide analysis which serves as guide for textual and structural interpretation of the songs selected.

**Analysis of track 4: What Manner of Man is Jesus?**

The song is a soft-reggae gospel song in a simple quadruple metric pattern. The song is presented with an alternation by solo and chorus in andante tempo. An introductory interlude built on the pentatonic scale is played with strings on the keyboard to cue in the solo. The music represents true
African musical form with its religiously repeated melody. The melodic range utilized in the melody includes 2nds, 3rds, 4ths and 8th. The chorus part explores parallel harmony in 3-parts with the use of the dominant seventh chord resolved to the tonic at cadential points. The song is homophonic in texture. Musical instruments used are keyboard-piano (tone-bank), Jazz drum, and the Bass guitar. The song describes Jesus as the messiah who died to set mankind free. The composer expresses his love for Jesus for his decision to die for mankind.

The song is composed and recorded in three parts (Soprano, alto and tenor). It is divided into two sections: section one (solo/lead singer) and section two (chorus). The musical examples are presented below.

Section One
The song is composed in D-major. It started with instrumental introduction before the solo. Except of musical example is shown below:

What Manner of Man Is Jesus

Section Two:
This section is the chorus section sung in three parts (soprano mirroring the lead part, alto and tenor) with repetition of ‘Jesus my love’ bring this section to an end.
Chorus.

Analysis of Track 8: Jesus shall reign
The song is reggae gospel song composed in simple quadruple meter. The oral presentation of the song is in solo and chorus form. The melody is sung by two voices a 3rd apart throughout the music and the chorus comes in with 3-part parallel harmony. Melodic interval employed includes 2nds, 3rds, 5ths, and 8ths. The song is monophonic in texture. The keyboard-piano (tone-bank), Jazz drum, Bass guitar and a lead guitar were used in the rendition of the song.

The track is composed and recorded in F-major in binary form. It is divided into two sections: section one – chorus and section two (chorus). These would be analyzed with necessary musical examples.
Section One
The song started with both vocal and instrumental entering at the same time in harmony of lead vocal, soprano, alto and tenor in homophonic movement. Except of musical example is shown below:

**Jesus shall reign**

![Musical Example](image_url)

Section Two
This section is the duet section echoing the names of states in Nigeria. The intonation of the names influenced the melodic arrangement of the section. Except of musical example is shown below:

**Duet**

![Musical Example](image_url)
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Chorus

Textual Form and Structure of Track 4 and 8
Using Nigerian gospel music as a case study; Adedeji (2010) identifies two types of textual forms and structures; (i) short – verses and (ii) long verses. Adedeji describes further thus:
The long-verse form, which is purely additive also has two different types in the first One, both solo and chorus alternate...The other one is exclusively rendered by Solo as stanzas. [2010: 105].

The textual implication of the track, What Manner of Man is Jesus is an expression of God’s goodness to mankind through His son, Jesus. This is evident through the narrative stanzas in the track. The text is inherently linked to the praise of God and purely gospel music.
Track 8, “Jesus shall Reign” talks about the supremacy and sovereignty of Jesus in all parts of the country. This is a kin to the gospel text that calls Him, “Omnipotent” and “Omniscience” and “Omnipresence.” The mentioning of individual states in Nigeria is in accordance to the omnipresent nature of God earlier stated above. The intonations of the names of the states also influenced the melodic fragments used.
Conclusion

The analysis of the textual form and structure of track4 ‘what manner of man is Jesus’ and track 8 ‘Jesus shall reign of the gospel album “OnaAbayo Da” by Professor Adedeji, reveals the predominant use of long-variant constructs in textual context, well tempered rhythmic and melodic structure as well as a balanced compositional technique in both the solo stanzas and choruses. The overall text also reflects the composer’s/performer’s optimism in spreading the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all parts of the nation and to all humans both of edification and transformation of hearts and souls.

In conclusion, it has been revealed through this study that ‘Femi Adedeji as a creative teacher, articulate scholar and academic giant, has made significant impact in music scholarship. The quality of researches and the album produced by this erudite scholar are recommendable. His students, supervisee and colleagues have benefited in no small measure from this wealth of knowledge. His style of soft reggae music production, his contribution to African musicology and his achievements so far, an attribute that shows him as an expert and excellent scholar . His unique way of life has inspired many young scholars. It could be recommended therefore, professor ‘Femi Adadeji gospel songs should further be researched and analyzed by scholars. His musical album should be made available as part of teaching aids for studies in tertiary institutions.

References


